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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 39th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 39^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Thursday 18 November 2010****Jeudi 18 novembre 2010**Speaker
Honourable Steve PetersPrésident
L'honorable Steve PetersClerk
Deborah DellerGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Sikh prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 2010, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 2010, I am now required to put the question:

On October 21, 2010, Mr. Bentley moved second reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Second reading vote deferred.

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant

d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I would like to defer the lead of our critic as he is on a committee at present. Do we have unanimous consent to stand down the lead?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, first of all, for that and giving me an opportunity to participate in this debate. It's quite apropos that at this particular time we're having this debate, for a few reasons: one, just because of the content of the bill—and I'll get into that in a little bit—but just generally, when it comes to rules around how we monitor our water, how we treat our water, and how we make sure that the water that comes out of the tap when you need it is safe.

As we know, we went through a pretty horrific time here in Ontario some years ago with what happened in Walkerton. I'm not going to go into detail on that, except to say that we recognize that that was a tragedy where people died as a result of drinking water, and there was a response by the Ontario Legislature in order to deal with that. We have ended up creating some of the toughest, some of the best rules when it comes to making sure that drinking water for individuals, as put through the municipal water systems, is the safest it can be. We are probably second to none in Canada and, I would argue, probably rank fairly well worldwide when it comes to the safety of the water in Ontario as a result of that tragic experience and what was learned from it.

I want to take the opportunity to speak about how we haven't really ensured that drinking water for Ontarians is safe. It's interesting, the Ontario government and this Legislature says we need to make sure that the water is safe for everybody in Ontario except those people who live in First Nations communities. Why do we do that? Why do we as Ontarians not ensure that the federal government, which is responsible for the infrastructure on reserves, ensures that the drinking water on-reserve is safe? It seems to me that if we're saying to municipalities, "You have to ensure that water is safe for your citizens and your municipality," certainly to God we can figure out a way to make sure that the federal government, the absentee landlord of reserves, does something when it comes to making sure that the water on-reserve is safe.

Let me just give you a couple of examples of what's going on today. I won't even talk about the Kashechewan water crisis till later. Imagine my surprise: I went to Attawapiskat last Wednesday, I believe, for a number of meetings with band council and others, and one of the

issues that they raised with me is their water plant. I was a bit surprised because we just built a water plant in Attawapiskat some five, six, seven years ago. So it's a brand new plant. The province of Ontario participated in that process, by the way, but by and large, the lion's share of the money came from the federal government. The federal government, as you know, under Health Canada, is supposed to be responsible for the monitoring of the water that comes out of those taps. Well, imagine my surprise when I find out there has not been one inspector who has gone into the water plant in Attawapiskat in the last year.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Not one?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not one. Why? Because that particular individual who used to do the job for Health Canada took retirement. The federal government can't seem to find somebody to ensure that the water in Attawapiskat is safe and that there's proper monitoring done of what comes out of the taps.

My point is simply this: Are not First Nations citizens in this province citizens of Ontario? I think we'll all agree the answer is yes. If we agree that they're citizens of the province of Ontario as well as being Canadians, then we certainly have a responsibility to ensure that our First Nations brothers and sisters on reserves across this province are able to have the same type of standard when it comes to drinking water in their taps as they do in taps outside the reserves in Ontario. So I, in this debate, want to take the opportunity to say to the government of Ontario: We have an absentee landlord. They're called Stephen Harper and the federal government, and before that it was Jean Chrétien and the federal government.

0910

The federal government, we know, is a complete disaster when it comes to dealing with First Nations and the infrastructure in those communities. You only have to go visit reserves across this province to see to what degree the federal government refuses, continues to refuse and always will refuse to do what's right by First Nations communities. We're talking about families with 20, 25 people per house. We're talking about houses that are old, substandard and, in many cases, full of mildew and mould of various types. We have situations where there's not a hockey arena, there's not a recreational facility for the kids to be able to exercise and do what other kids do around the province. We're talking about schools that are substandard—in some cases, schools that don't even exist because the federal government has been delinquent in its responsibility to ensure that kids have schools as we our children do across this province. I am prepared to say there's hardly anything that the federal government does on-reserve that works. It's all a failure.

So here lies the question: If the federal government, as I contend, is completely irresponsible and unwilling to take its responsibility when it comes to the lives of those people who live on-reserve, then who should? And I'm not suggesting for one second that we say to the federal government, "We will take over your fiduciary responsibility." Absolutely not. I wouldn't let those suckers off

the hook for two seconds. But my point is, we need to start applying some standards on reserves by way of law. I know it's going to be kind of problematic because the Constitution gives the federal government responsibility for aboriginal issues, but we need to find a way to pressure the federal government and, if necessary, shame them into doing what is natural for all other citizens in the province of Ontario.

First Nations kids should be able to go to the tap in their home, go to the tap in their school, open the tap and drink the water out of any tap in that community and know that they're not going to get sick, as any other child or adult in this province of Ontario is able to do now when it comes to municipal water systems. Why is it that we allow the federal government off the hook for not ensuring that water is made safe?

Every child, every individual should have the right to housing. You go into First Nations communities across this province and the housing situation is deplorable. It is substandard, it is overcrowded, and certainly, something needs to be done to resolve it. I was in Attawapiskat again on Wednesday of last week and the temporary housing measure—this is INAC, the department of Indian affairs, that oh-so-great ministry federally that's responsible for native issues. They said, "Oh, we have a solution to the sewer backup system in Attawapiskat. We're going to make a deal with De Beers Canada and we're going to move the temporary construction trailers that the construction workers lived in on-reserve so we can make that a temporary shelter when we have to evacuate people."

Well, first of all, they're admitting that they're going to have to evacuate people because of substandard infrastructure. Can you believe that? Can you imagine the government of Ontario saying, "We're going to create, in the city of Timmins or Toronto or Thunder Bay or Cornwall, temporary accommodations, because we know every year we're going to have to evacuate citizens because our infrastructure has failed"? Can you imagine that? But anyways, that's what the federal government did through INAC, that oh-so-great ministry that takes care of First Nations issues.

They installed these trailers. To De Beers' credit, they gave them to the community, and that was good on their part. But here's the problem: You have now 90 rooms, about 10 feet by 10 feet square, in which 90 families live, and it's not a temporary accommodation; it's a permanent accommodation. So imagine that. Imagine you, your wife and your two babies, three babies are having to live in a 10 by 10 room. That's where you live.

Why should anybody live in that kind of situation? Not only do they have to live in that, but there are four toilets. You know those toilet bowls? I'm not talking about bathrooms; I'm talking toilet bowls. There are four of them for 90 families. There are four showers for 90 families. There are four stoves for 90 families. People are having to line up at the bathroom by shift, having to cook by shift and figure out when they're going to bathe. Would we allow that in Toronto?

Let's say we had a situation where we had an evacuation of some type in a city or town somewhere in Ontario. We would make sure that people were able to have some adequate type of temporary accommodation. But then we would be in there trying to fix it, saying, "Let's fix whatever the problem is so these people don't have to be continually evacuated." If we don't accept it for any other citizen in the province of Ontario, then why are we accepting it for First Nations individuals?

I know that some people are going to say, "Bisson is a one-trick pony. Whenever he gets a chance, he comes into the House and talks about these native affairs issues, these aboriginal issues. Maybe he's talking about that too much." I talk about it because nobody else does. I'm tired of going onto reserves in my riding and in Howard's riding and in other people's ridings where I continually see the same thing. Yes, there's progress being made. But, oh, my God, they're little baby steps, because it's all about incrementalism with the federal government.

I have no use for the federal government. I am so peeved with those guys when it comes to their lack of response or their lack of responsibility and doing nothing for citizens such as we see in First Nations. They're so busy talking about absolutely nothing on the Hill that has to do with anybody else that they can't find a solution for some of our first citizens in this province and in this country.

So, yeah, I raise these issues. I wish I didn't have to. I wish that communities on reserves across Ontario and Canada were flourishing, as many of our communities are, and people had hope, and people had safe drinking water and places to live and good schools for their kids and paved roads and sidewalks—you know, those kinds of things. But it's not the case. So, yeah, when this type of debate arises in the House and when, in this case, we're talking about safe drinking water under Bill 72, I'm going to raise it, because I believe Ontario has to be the solution. I didn't say part of it; the solution.

I say to my honourable friend the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and to the Premier, that I understand their argument when they stand here and say, "We can't take over what the federal government doesn't do." I hear you. I'm not asking Ontario to all of a sudden say, "You feds stand aside. We're taking over. We're coming with our chequebook." That's not what I'm asking for. What I'm saying is that we become the solution, because what is clear is that the federal government is not going to do it. How can we, as legislators, and the government of Ontario stand aside and watch an absentee landlord in those reserves across this country?

I say to the Premier and to the cabinet and to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs that I want us to be the solution. I want us to hold the federal government accountable for safe drinking water standards on reserves. I'm not saying we have to pay for it. I'm saying we need to figure out how we force the federal government to do what is naturally done in every other community across this province. If my neighbour digs a well, there are standards by which we drill the well, extract water from

the well and, if it's any kind communal water system, make sure it is safe for people to drink, but we do nothing about entire communities because they happen to be reserves? I think we need to be the solution.

I think the provincial government has got to think about what is our plan when it comes to making sure the federal government does take its responsibilities, and yes, if necessary, us ponying up some dollars as well, because we are benefiting from much of what is happening now within First Nations territory. We know the De Beers diamond mine. We know that Detour Lake is about to start, a 60,000-tonne-a-day gold operation. Can you imagine how big 60,000 tonnes a day is? The OPG water development, \$2.7 billion; the money that's going to generate for the province of Ontario through Hydro. The Ring of Fire is being talked about and touted as a great thing. Well, we are going to benefit from those territories, and I think we need to be part of the solution and, yes, we need to help with infrastructure as well.

What is clear is that the federal government is not going to do anything so long as we continue the policy of Ontario and federal government, which has been, "You don't say anything about what I'm doing, and I won't say anything about what you're doing when it comes to First Nations."

Policing, a shared responsibility—the federal government pays 51%; we pay 49%—but they're under the Police Services Act. That was a provincial act the last time I checked. We have situations across First Nations where there aren't adequate stations for the police to work out of, and there isn't adequate jails to house people when they're being picked up for whatever it might be, overnight or for a couple of days, due to an altercation of some type with the law or they're being held until they're transferred to a court or jail or they're being picked up for impaired—whatever it might be.

0920

We know the effect of that. There was a fire in Kashechewan where two men died in jail. Why? Because the jail didn't meet minimum standards when it comes to safety. What was used to lock the jail cells was a chain with a padlock, so there was no easy way of opening the door in case of an emergency. The officer ran in to where the men were being held and was trying to pick the lock with the key, but because of the smoke and the intensity of the fire, he wasn't able to get the key in the lock. Imagine what that person lives with every day, knowing he wasn't able to put the key in the lock to let the men out of the jail and they died. Imagine what that officer feels today. There was no fire detection system. There was no smoke detection system. There wasn't even a fire alarm, for heaven's sake. Two men died in the fire as a result of not having adequate standards.

Everywhere else in Ontario there is a standard when it comes to how we operate our jails. Can you imagine if the OPP or the local police in Sarnia or London or Kirkland Lake had to work in the conditions that NAPS, Nishnawbe-Aski Police, have to work in and what the citizens would have to deal with if they ever came in

contact with those jailhouses? There would be an uproar. My God, the government of Ontario and the Solicitor General—there's no way we would allow that to happen. Why do we allow it to happen in First Nations?

I'll tell you why. The federal government doesn't give a hoot. They don't see First Nations as equal citizens across this country. They see them as: "We made a deal with you guys. Go away. Hide on your reserves. We're not interested. We'll let INAC deal with you." INAC: Boy, I've got things to say about them, but that's a whole other issue. I can't say most of them, because it would be totally unparliamentary.

Here we are again: a question of standards, with inadequate standards in most of our jails and most of our police stations across the area.

The case of this contractor's trailer in Attawapiskat: I raised in the House last when I came back that those trailers—this is all going to be in writing, and we're going to put both the federal and provincial governments on notice if that hasn't been done already. There is no fire detection system other than a camera that a security guard watches. In other words, if a fire were to start inside one of the rooms, we'd have no way of knowing until the fire came out, and by then it's too late. There is no fire suppression system—sprinklers or whatever it might be—and there's no fire alarm. You've got 90 families, and if a fire starts in one of the rooms in one of those units and somebody finds out and runs and tries to pull the fire alarm, there's none. It doesn't work.

Why do we allow that to happen? I really ask myself, "Is it because we don't care?" I know that members in the House are all honourable members, and they care. I do know that. I look at my friend Mr. Levac, whom I've worked with on a number of aboriginal issues, and whom I consider a friend and an ally on those issues. The issue is that we can't continually let the federal government off the hook. In the case of police stations, they're under the Police Services Act and 49% paid for by us.

Take a look at infrastructure, when it comes to water, when it comes to housing, when it comes to roads—any infrastructure. It doesn't exist in First Nations communities. People need to understand that there are very few reserves across Ontario where proper infrastructure exists. There are a few, but not a heck of a lot of them. In the vast majority—90% of them—it's a pretty dismal situation. Why do we allow that to happen?

I say to the government, "Yeah, the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, I get it." I have no problem with the concept of what you're doing in the bill; however, there are problems with what you've done in the bill. I'll let Mr. Tabuns, our critic, speak to that in more detail.

I wanted to take this opportunity to say that we, as a province, must ensure we take responsibility for the citizens of Ontario no matter where they live, and that includes First Nations. The day we start doing our jobs, as legislators and the government of Ontario, in ensuring there are standards that are applied on reserves when it comes to safe drinking water, when it comes to proper

infrastructure, when it comes to schools that are adequate for the needs of our children—once we start to do those things as a province, it will force the federal government to take on its responsibility and also sort of cipher out what we have to do, as the Ontario Legislature, in order to ensure that the citizens who live on reserves across this province are able to take similar things for granted that we do in our communities when it comes to essential things such as safe drinking water.

I thank the members for allowing me the time to put those items on the record, and I look forward to their comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I was listening intently to my colleague and friend from Timmins—James Bay, and I want to tell him right off the bat that he struck a chord with me. He struck a chord with me in his speech inasmuch as the missing-in-action federal government, the difficulties we've had in my riding in ensuring that that's happening. But I will give him some good news, and that is that with the Chrétien government and then with the Harper government, we finally did get some water relief. There's a plant being built, but it has been a long time coming.

The other part to that is that I tend to agree with the sentiment he's trying to raise, and that is that we've got to find a way to navigate this political quagmire. We've got to find a way to navigate the pressure that needs to be put on the federal government, because if we could do that relief valve he's talking about, I'm absolutely convinced we can actually get into the claims. We can actually get those things resolved, and inside of the partnership that he's talking about.

I'm optimistic. I honestly believe that there are enough people outside of the federal government at this time who are starting to come together. Municipalities are making agreements, such as what has been happening in my riding. The people themselves are beginning to be educated about the condition that they're living in. This is southern Ontario, one of the richest places in the world, and we have the circumstances that you're describing? It's not acceptable.

For myself, I believe dearly in what you're talking about. I agree with your philosophy. I agree with your sentiment that says, "It's our neighbour. Somebody is there who's in distress. We should be helping." We've got to help ourselves find a way to navigate that quagmire.

I'm going to ask my government to try to work that way and respect, at the same time, not letting the feds off the hook. I want to be strong about my emphasis, and I know you are too. So I agree with my colleague, and I thank him for his comments today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Timmins—James Bay, I think, should be highly praised for his careful attention to the First Nations' plight, as he described.

We've heard that a number of times over the past several years, about the unsafe drinking water on-reserve. To think that they have a new plant and are unable to manage it properly isn't a good thing. I don't know why they have to actually go to a federal ministry. I think they should take some of that and have an on-site person, a qualified First Nations person trained in the proper kind of monitoring and measuring, because it is their water.

In fact, if you look at this bill and the comments that he was making, I would hope to have the chance this morning to speak on it because I think the government, although this is their second bill on water, still doesn't quite get it. In fact, I think if you stay tuned, some members on this side have said that they characterize this entire Bill 72 as smart meters for water. Now, you might wonder what that means. In fact, I think what they're trying to do under water quality is monitoring it. It's also another sort of suspicious move, if you will, of downloading another responsibility. Mr. Speaker, you would like this: While sounding like doing the right thing, they are actually downloading it to the municipal level. I'll be reporting to the House this morning on an important bill issued to the joint works committee at Durham region by Mr. Cliff Curtis, the commissioner of works, as well as Mr. Clapp, the commissioner of finance. It clearly makes the point that this is downloading.

So I look forward to that, and I thank the member for his remarks and hard work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I understand where the member from Timmins-James Bay is coming from when he speaks about the small communities. Some of the communities that I visited with him back when I was on the finance and economic affairs committee were Attawapiskat and Moosonee, and it really took me back to the days as a consulting engineer, where we were dealing with small municipalities. The technology is often too complex. We take the city technology and we put it in the small communities and it doesn't work.

The federal government has that responsibility. They should be doing something about it. I feel so great that if I'm in Toronto and take a drink of water out of the tap, it is good-tasting water, it's safe water, and it gets us away from all that plastic that we don't want to use.

0930

The city of Ottawa spent tens of millions of dollars upgrading their plants, and our water bills have gone way up, but so they should. The municipalities have to do their best, but they have to have the revenues to properly run their systems, and the small systems are very expensive to run on a per capita basis when you have 1,000 or 2,000 users.

That's one of the things that this government is doing to make sure small municipalities have high-quality infrastructure. We have a program for the small—I believe it's 2,500 connections, so approximately a population of 5,000; I'd have to check that. The Ontario small

waterworks assistance program, OSWAP, is over \$50 million. That's a new program that's just going out now.

We are doing a lot. Part of An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010, is taking the expertise Canadians have and exporting that to other countries and giving work to our engineers and to our contractors. We have the expertise, and this bill is going to help us pool that together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I don't think the member for Timmins-James Bay has to make any apologies whatsoever about his advocacy for native people, aboriginal peoples, especially in northern Ontario. Many of us in this chamber, certainly those of us in the NDP caucus, have had the opportunity to travel with the member for Timmins-James Bay to some of those communities, and we've witnessed what are real atrocities. It's an honour to have the member here in the chamber reminding this government of its delinquency, that is to say the government's delinquency, in addressing the needs of those Ontarians. You travel to some of those communities and you're not even sure you're in Canada anymore. Certainly the people living in those communities don't feel that there's any connection with Queen's Park, or Ottawa, for that matter.

I, for one, as a southerner who has been fortunate enough to be witness to those atrocities, find it appalling that this government repeatedly would simply shrug off the concerns of the member for Timmins-James Bay and our colleague the member for Kenora-Rainy River as well—would shrug them off and somehow say, "Well, it's not our problem. It's a matter for the federal government." The responsibility of the province extends beyond North Bay. It somehow strikes me as tragic that here at Queen's Park there's far too often a perception that the province of Ontario begins and ends at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor. Well, it doesn't. It encompasses a whole lot more than that, and it's about time that this government stepped up to the plate and accepted responsibility. I suppose an apology would be in order but, more importantly, some action on behalf of those communities that Mr. Bisson speaks of, and the people who struggle daily to live in them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank members for their comments, and I just want to respond to one particular part, where the member for Oshawa—or Durham, I guess it is—says, "Why don't the communities themselves do the water testing?" They'd love to. Where is the federal government with the money to help do the training so that they can qualify the people to run the water plants? That's the problem. And where is the federal government in designing water plants that are able to function and have the capacity for the water needed in those communities, knowing that those are communities with very quickly increasing populations?

In Constance Lake right now, another reserve in my riding just north of Hearst, everybody is now on bottled water, and they're having to bring water trucks in from nearby water sources to pump water into the water system in order to provide water for that community. So if there is a fire, there's no ability to fight that fire, because they wouldn't have enough water to run the fire truck. But the federal government is still haggling about what the solution is to resolve the water issue in Constance Lake. They're trying to minimize their financial exposure to the solution by proposing something that the community already knows is not going to meet the needs and is not going to be able to provide the quantity and quality of water that that community needs now and into tomorrow.

That's the problem, and that's why I'm saying—and my colleague Mr. Kormos, the member from Welland-Thorold, is right—that we need, as a province, to take our responsibility and we need to say to the federal government, “There are standards when it comes to drinking water in the province and you're going to bloody well follow them.” If they don't like it, we need to find a way to force them to do it. If we have to drag them kicking and screaming and we've got to shame them, we've got to do whatever we've got to do, we just go and do it, because it is what this Legislature should be doing. The provincial government says they want a new relationship with First Nations; this is the way to prove it. Start that new relationship by becoming allies of First Nations and making sure that at the end of the day we do what's right by them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a bill that I sort of paraphrased at the beginning by saying it's smart meters for water usage. That's basically where we're headed. Now, what leads me to this suspicion is—I just have to link the point I'm trying to make and the argument we're making on this side. First of all, I'm disappointed—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: There is a discussion going on that's overriding my comments.

I read an article in the paper this morning that I think says a lot about the government's approach to measuring human activity. The article is by Joe Warmington of the Toronto Sun. It says, “It's interesting how the word coping was not mentioned in campaign literature when the Liberals were running in the last election.” I'm quoting from an article here. “But it is on the record for the next one.” So they're setting the table here in the last few days, and this afternoon we'll hear it. “Meanwhile, Premier Dalton McGuinty's phantom talk of a temporary 10% reduction in hydro costs Wednesday reminds one of having to thank a guy because he stops hammering you in the head.”

The consumer is getting the pain and the Premier is going to give them relief. It leaves so many questions unanswered, and we're hearing comments in our ridings about being hammered in the pocketbook and, as Mr. Warmington says, on the head. Here's what is really

going on here. We're not sure if the 10% will be on the total bill, as is the HST, or it'll be on the electrons only, because if you look at the bill, it is made up primarily of other supportive charges, many of which they can't explain in the House. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has asked questions on that.

Going back to the bill, this bill is the second bill on the topic of water. I'm even more surprised—in third reading, I listened yesterday very carefully to our member from Haldimand-Norfolk, our critic for the environment and those topics—very well informed, a very cohesive discussion and argument. This morning, the government members sitting in the House—how few there are—are refusing to talk on the bill. I find that suspicious as well. As we move along here about the backtracking over the last few months, actually—mostly since we came back in September—the government seems to have one direction, and that means reverse.

Now this bill—this is the second, as I said—introduced in May 2010, here's how important it was. The hearings were held in October, when the municipal election was on, and it's my understanding that there was not one elected person at the municipal level—and water is a municipal responsibility; the regulations are provincial, arguably—but there were no presentations or persons from elected office that appeared. There were submissions, and I want to commend Durham region for one of the more complete and comprehensive submissions. It isn't a topic that I would politicize. I mean by that that around the world, the topic or question being asked is, “Is water a human right?” That's the question globally. We look at Third World countries and the lack of clean drinking water is really a primary cause of many of the ailments, including what's going on in Haiti. So let's not treat this topic lightly. It is really important.

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The report issued on June 15 by the Durham region commissioner of public works, Mr. Curtis, and the commissioner of finance, Mr. Clapp, requested the government to have proactive consultations with the following agencies—I'm hoping and putting on the record that they've done that—“to develop a common template for reporting on municipal sustainability and conservation plans: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Water Environment Association of Ontario ... Water Works Association, the Municipal Engineers Association, Ontario Public Works Association, Regional Public Works Commissioners of Ontario and the Municipal Finance Officers' Association” and that the report, J-33, “be forwarded to the Ministers of the Environment, Energy and Infrastructure, Economic Development and Trade” as well—and that's the report that I'm referring to; it's report 2010-J-33.

You have to look at this in the context of what is actually going on on a broader scale. There's two things—and this is why it troubles me. I'll get to the point in the few minutes I've been allowed this morning. I have a major issue, which I have spoken to Minister Wilkinson about, in my riding of Durham, and it's on Lakeridge

Road, which is sort of the boundary road between Uxbridge and Scugog township. On that site, there's a quarry that's being questionably rehabilitated by a numbered company, and the numbered company is Earthworx.

There's a public hearing that's going to be held, I believe, next week on that, and I think there will be ministry officials there. I've spoken to the minister several times on this, about the neighbours suggesting that they're dumping materials that are contaminated. In fact, the municipality of Scugog—Port Perry and that area—Mayor Marilyn Pearce has requested Golder Associates to do testing on the soils that are being dumped there.

But here's the issue: That is on the greenbelt, the Oak Ridges moraine, which is one of their cornerstones of environmental quality. In fact, when I asked the first time, I was told that clean fill permitting of dumping is allowed at the municipal level; contaminated fill is allowed and regulated provincially. But the real issue here is, who's testing the soil to see if it's clean or not?

The municipality contracted Golder Associates to do the testing on the soil, and it was found that there was contamination in the soil. I reported, along with the municipality, to the ministry—in fact, right up to the deputy minister. I was so tired of getting baloney for answers and no attention that we had to go right through to the deputy minister. This is the aquifer—and that's the point: The aquifer is right near the bottom on the Oak Ridges moraine, feeding the wells and the supply of water to many, many areas.

To date, I'm unsatisfied with any action taken. There was an order issued on October 25, an order of enforcement and to have a qualified person to inspect these loads. When the loads of material from site recovery—it could be a brownfield site, it could be just levelling the site for some other use. Who's monitoring that activity? Who's manifesting those loads that leave the site in downtown Toronto to the site in Uxbridge, Port Perry? How do we know what's actually in the material? Who's responsible? Who's responsible for the cleanup? Who's responsible for the water? The same thing: When they say Oak Ridges moraine—what they've done with the greenbelt is they've downloaded the responsibility for those sensitive areas with very, very little money to enforce, monitor etc. I find that as one more example.

This bill does basically the same thing. No one—our leader, Tim Hudak, made it very clear to us that we recognize the importance of safe, clean drinking water and support all of the Walkerton recommendations by the O'Connor report, so let's not try to imply that someone in this House, of any side, has some opposition to safe, clean drinking water.

Now, let's put it in context. If you look back to September and October 2006, this very government had a bill, Bill 43, the Clean Water Act. Ms. Broten was the minister at that time, but she had to leave cabinet because of the Taj Ma-garage. But this one was An Act to protect existing and future sources of drinking water to make complementary and other amendments to other acts. That one, I can recall, was really closing in on having higher standards for private wells.

Now, on those private wells, I'm the person who puts the well in and spends the \$20,000 for the well, or other people who have a private well. The suggestion out there was that they were going to start charging you for the water that you take out of the aquifer through that well. Well, they denied that, but I want that on the record as, "stay tuned." Remember, I started by saying that this whole thing is rather suspicious, because we call it the smart meters for wells, and this is just a strategic step along the way—responsibly so—to downloading it to the consumer, to the private citizen who is already strangled on every single thing they do.

It's called the HST, for one thing, which restricts every single expenditure or service. Whether it's physiotherapy or getting your income tax done, it's all going to be taxed. On every single activity or service, you're being taxed, and this—

Mr. Jeff Leal: A point of order, Mr. Speaker: I always enjoy the very well-informed remarks from the member from Durham, but we may be veering slightly off topic—certainly at your guidance, Mr. Speaker, as we continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I appreciate the point, but every once in a while he does refer to the bill and he certainly talks about water, so I'll let the honourable member from Durham continue.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Speaker. I will try to connect the dots here. Some people, perhaps, aren't listening intently enough to realize that I see a suspicious recurring—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Theme.

Mr. John O'Toole: —theme of command and control. That's really what I'm worried about. It's Father Knows Best, but it turns out that he really doesn't.

In fact, if you look, all of the things you've backed—the eco tax. We would support a proper reduction, a source reduction of environmentally sensitive material. What they were doing was quite the opposite: They were just collecting tax on it, on the plastics and things that couldn't be recycled. It was absurd, but it was a great tax grab because every dozen eggs you bought with that plastic on it, you would have to pay tax on it. Rather than dealing with trying to reduce and eliminate the source itself, they have the most perverse approach: They think, "Tax it."

Here's what energy is doing: The smart meter is actually a cash register for the government. The smart meter says that you're going to pay more whenever it's the logical time to do the function, which is washing your clothes or cooking your food. All those times, the rate is double; it's actually double. If you look at the charts, the normal rate is about five cents and the high peak rate is about 10 cents, nine-point-something. They're encouraging you, the Premier says in a gleeful tone, to do your laundry on the weekends. This is micromanagement, and I see it in water. I see the same thing in water. I see the same thing—

Hon. Carol Mitchell: When was the last time you did laundry?

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, I would say—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, see, I've touched a nerve because the Liberals—you see, I am a parent of five children. In fact, I was a single parent of five children for a while. So don't—look, just stay to your own script. If you have a script, you can get up and speak; otherwise, listen up.

I will try to give you the information that I've received from Durham region, which says that you already have a lot of tools. You have the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and the Oak Ridges moraine act, the conservation act—requirements for municipalities to show leadership in water conservation.

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This goes on to say, "Part II of the proposed act would establish the Water Technology Acceleration Project (WaterTAP) as a non-crown corporation to 'grow globally competitive companies, and provide high-value jobs in Ontario's water and waste water sector.'" The Ministry of Research and Innovation fact sheet says this. The government has allocated \$5 million annually over three years to hire some—eventually, the municipality is going to have to pay for this.

They are going to be required to submit sustainability plans to the ministry—circumvents the autonomy of council. It says, "Although staff recognize the merit in requiring an asset management plan as part of the sustainability plan for water and sewer systems, there are numerous concerns with the sustainability plan requirement as follows...."

What they're requiring them to do is hire consultants to do various capital appreciation and monitoring of systems and then return this to the ministry. What's missing is any funding to do this. When you raise the requirements without the right support mechanisms in place, you're raising taxes locally. If you think it's that important, put your money where your mouth is. I would say that's what's missing in this bill. It's what's missing in the electricity bill.

When I look at electricity, the Green Energy Act sounds great, the same as this sounds great. Look at the detail. You can see it on your bill. The consumer is paying through the nose. Right now, they are paying for solar power—Mr. Speaker, you know this yourself in your area—80.2 cents a kilowatt hour. What are you paying for it in your home? It's five or six cents. Where is that other 60 or 70 cents coming from? It's coming from you from another pocket. They're taking credit for making electricity twice as expensive.

They often refer to countries like Denmark—this is important—as a country with a balanced sustainability energy plan. We should look at the best practices, for sure. Let's look at the other side of it. The cost of energy in Denmark is 34 cents per kilowatt hour.

Okay, let's take your bill. There have been 500 questions asked on it here in the House; Ms. Horwath has asked a lot, along with our leader, Tim Hudak. What it is today is 10 cents a kilowatt hour, plus all those other

charges, and plus the HST on top of everything—it's about eight cents a kilowatt hour. It's between five and 10, so we'll say eight cents a kilowatt hour. Four times eight is 32, so if your bill is \$100, it's now going to be \$400. It's that simple. Do the math.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It's not that simple.

Mr. John O'Toole: Tell the people the truth. Use the green language framework, and then tell them the truth about what it's actually going to cost you.

Give consumers choice: "If you want Bullfrog Power that's 18 cents, sign here." That's what you should tell them. Do this in the time of the economy when we have high unemployment, poor investments—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Agriculture is talking about deregulation. I'd like them to explain on this bill, Bill 72, how much money they're transferring to the municipalities to pick up these increased standards and regulations, monitoring and capital monitoring reports. You tell me if this isn't downloading by stealth. What I'm pointing is—well, it's a smart meter. Now you have the meter on the water meter—and it clearly says that it's got to be full-cost recovery. So if I say to the waterworks employees, qualified people, that they've got to do these new functions—monitoring, testing, testing for more materials, report to the ministry, hire new staff, with the computer system to do it—that's going to be on your water bill, just like today it's on your electricity bill. I think this is absolute deception.

I can honestly say to myself, everybody wants clean water and safe, reliable, affordable electricity. These are essential commodities for persons at all income means. It's a universal discussion around the world in terms of safe, clean—but what they're doing is they're downloading it. They're actually commercializing some of the activities, which will drive up the prices.

I can say that when I look through the Durham region report, and the question of autonomy at the lower tiers as well, it's sort of like the greenbelt—I'm going back to the issue at Lakeridge there, where the aquifer is threatened by contaminated material potentially being deposited right over the aquifer, and the province hasn't given them five cents to monitor it, to test the materials, and some kind of standing. So I blew the whistle last week. I went right to Beggs, the deputy. I said, "Look, you know now that people think it's contaminated"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. John O'Toole: Can I have unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, for more time?

Interjections: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I heard a no. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I, for one, applaud the member from Durham for his analysis of this bill. It's a sop to those Ontarians who are enthusiastic about environmental issues, but it's nothing more than a sop. It's shallow, it's hollow.

One of the problems that the member for Durham understands and that certainly impacts on the communities that I'm proud to represent is that you can't talk about encouraging clean water technologies without providing communities like the ones where I come from that have been bankrupted by this government's job destruction policy, without financing that infrastructure in those communities.

Understand, where I come from, places like Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, even St. Catharines have lost huge chunks of industry over the course of the last four, five and six years, and thousands and thousands of jobs. It's not just the job loss; it's the loss of industrial tax assessment. We don't have factories anymore; we've got brownfields. The largest single employer in Welland is Canadian Tire Acceptance, a call centre, when it used to be Atlas Steel and Union Carbide and Page-Hersey and Welland Tubes and half a dozen forges.

You don't just lose the jobs, you lose the tax assessment. That means that in cities like Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold and St. Catharines, you can't invest in the infrastructure. That means that water pipes rust and corrode underground. That means that sewer pipes crumble. That means that you threaten the quality of the water as it's being delivered to people's homes, and that means that in places like Niagara region you lose thousands and thousands and thousands of litres of water every year through leakage in the system. So unless this government is prepared to invest in communities themselves and end the download that impacted communities seven, eight and nine years ago, it's blowing hot air.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly it's a pleasure to make a few comments on what could be described as a very wide-ranging discussion from the member from Durham—with somewhat convoluted arguments at times, I would like to suggest.

I want to pick up on a couple of his points. He certainly is known to make his views known to the Minister of the Environment, John Wilkinson, on a number of occasions, and I hope he will acknowledge that the minister acted very speedily when made aware of the situation in Scugog that he referred to.

Another letter from the member from Durham to the minister was extremely useful in terms of information about Monoxygen, that uses an ozone water purification system. This is exactly the kind of company this bill will help, bringing good jobs to Durham and across Ontario, so the minister was really pleased to get that information from this member. That is, of course, why we are so disappointed that in fact the member voted against this bill during second reading.

Knowing that the Conservative Party is concerned, obviously, about business interests in particular, I'd like to mention to the member that earlier this morning, in fact at a breakfast meeting at RBC, which has taken a particular interest in the water industry, there was a group of some 80 to 100 business individuals to discuss the

report recently sponsored by Industry Canada, Water and the Future of the Canadian Economy. The audience this morning, which involved so many business leaders, has looked at our bill. It incorporates the elements that they were hoping to see that we would bring forward. In particular, WaterTAP, the Water Technology Acceleration Project, is being applauded widely.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to thank the member for Durham for his knowing remarks. They may have wandered a bit, but it's a broad subject.

When the member brought in the suggestion that the electricity costs of this province, which are now being metered or will soon be metered on so-called smart meters—smart in the fact that they are taking a lot of money out of consumers' pockets, and maybe not so smart on the part of the government, thinking that Ontario citizens would not catch on to this little game and see their hydro bills going through the roof.

The member started his comments by suggesting that this bill is the thin edge of the wedge to start a smart meter for water. Why not have a smart meter for water? After all, it's working in the hydro business, taking a lot of money out of the consumers' pockets that they can spend on their pet projects of windmills and solar energy—solar energy, as the member pointed out, that they're paying 81 cents a kilowatt hour for and selling for eight or nine cents a kilowatt hour. Obviously, they've never run a lemonade stand in the morning in the summertime, because anybody who had run a lemonade stand would understand that you can't buy something for 80 cents and sell it for nine cents and expect that there wouldn't be an increase in costs somewhere along the line.

The member for Durham has pointed this out, and the government would be wise to take very careful consideration of what the member pointed out for them. It hasn't worked in electricity and it won't work in water. I can assure the members that not only will the people in urban Ontario and suburbia be upset about having their water meters affect their water bills, but the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I think one of the main directions that the Water Opportunities Act, 2010, focuses on is water conservation and innovative technologies, and these are extremely important.

A person I know who's been in the water business a long time, Al Perks from R.V. Anderson in Ottawa, one of the longest-running engineering firms in Ontario—Al has been the manager of the Ottawa office for 25 years now. One of the things he tells me about water systems is that they have to be flexible for all sizes of communities.

Charging the right price for water is difficult in small communities, but this is one of the directions we want to go in, and to suggest that smart meters aren't important for electricity—I can't see anything that is going to ad-

vance conservation as much as knowing how you use that utility. When you think of it, you pay maybe—my own bill—I had my home retrofitted with a new furnace and air sealing etc., and I'm paying about \$80 or \$90 a month currently. I think, for cable, I'm paying about \$70 or \$80. So when you think of what you're getting, it's just amazing that we should not appreciate that smart meters are where the whole world is going. We have to conserve our energy.

With water, we have to look at trying to get systems that focus on what individual communities need, and that's what Al Perks has mentioned: You can't take the major city designs and put those out into the country. You have to be good. With the small communities, the First Nations communities, we have to do a lot of work in making sure conservation and innovative technologies are at the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Durham has two minutes for his response.

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank the members from Welland, Oak Ridges–Markham, Halton as well as Ottawa–Orléans.

I'm glad that people are paying attention to this very important topic. I suspect that I want to go back to a couple of things.

The member from Oak Ridges–Markham: I have a lot of respect for her. She's a former medical officer of health. She's right: There is a lot of attention being paid to water, and this is not the right kind of attention. This is all about collecting money. If you look at the report I refer to, J-33, I'm going to say quickly that it implements a 100% user-pay system with full metering. That's what it does. That's a smart meter reference I made.

Number two, it says it creates large water service areas and requires amalgamation of systems. It also adds costs to all the efforts. This is in the report. You can look it up. Its target and performance measures will be indicated by the minister. That's problematic. And it says it devolves the autonomy of the regions that actually do the job today.

I think the other part of this was said by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. I think that the importance of safe, clean water is not the whole story. The issue we're seeing in the paper today about smart meters for electricity is affordability, accessibility. They only think of one thing, and this is downloading to the municipalities and increasing the cost of water for every single Ontario citizen. If you've seen it with smart meters and electricity, you're about to see it in water.

This government has lost complete control or any reasonable plan of implementing essential consumption in Ontario. When you think of it, people wanting physiotherapy today are going to have to pay tax on it; children who want to register in programs are going to pay tax on them; and adults wanting to take tai chi, or whatever it is, will pay tax on it. This is all about tax-and-spend government, and Premier McGuinty has simply lost his way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'm going to get shortchanged a little bit this morning because I am allowed a modest 20 minutes. I resent that, but it's all the standing orders provide. You're going to shut it down at quarter after, so that means I've got only 10 or 11 minutes. That's okay. I'll come back next time the bill is called, and I'll finish up my time then.

The real fundamental issue here is the lack of funding for municipalities to undertake water conservation measures—end of story. As I told you a few minutes ago, I come from smaller-town Ontario, not the smallest town but a smaller town. Well, Wainfleet is a small town. I come from old, historic communities, that historically were industrial communities—Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, St. Catharines—and that have been gutted of their industry. That's what I told you a few minutes ago in the brief two minutes allowed during comments and questions.

Take a look at Welland. Atlas Steels: At one time, thousands of workers worked at Atlas Steels. My father was an Atlas Steels worker. As a kid, you'd see this army of green-garbed workers with their black lunch buckets walking down Cameron Avenue, Alliance Avenue, Major Street, to Atlas Steels. It was a steel mill, a stainless steel mill. It's now an empty grassy acreage that is a brownfield. Just as an aside, in smaller-town Ontario, the value of property isn't sufficiently high to justify the private sector in remediating it—as compared to, let's say, Toronto or Winnipeg—which means that it's very difficult to develop on these properties. That's Atlas Steels. Union Carbide: Again, the government here at Queen's Park—these were the canaries in the coal mines, because they were the precursors to the huge hemorrhaging of industrial jobs in Ontario. But it was the beginning, and you saw the inertia develop.

Atlas Steels, specialty stainless steel, the only manufacturer of its type in Canada, used to provide the drill rod for Sudbury Inco, for drilling. Now I'm told that Sudbury Inco buys that rod from Europe or other international sources because it's not available domestically. Union Carbide, gone; Page-Hersey, downsized now; Lakeside Welland Tubes gone—half a dozen forges gone.

And, as I say, it's not just the job loss; it's the tax loss. When you lose these industries, it doesn't mean you need fewer police officers. It doesn't mean that you need less water or sewerage. It doesn't mean that you need fewer firefighters. It doesn't mean that you need less paving on the road. What it does mean is that the cost of doing that is transferred over to residential property owners and, indirectly, even apartment dwellers, or the work that's required to be done simply doesn't get done. In particular, I'm going to talk about Wainfleet and the struggle that they have.

1010

But I also want to mention—because it's perhaps timely—that just the other night, I was reading a newly published book called *The Coke Machine: The Dirty*

Truth Behind the World's Favorite Soft Drink. The author is Michael Blanding. Amongst the other revelations in there—some I was already familiar with, for instance, Coca-Cola's endorsement, participation and support of paramilitaries in places like Colombia, which murder trade unionists. I was in Colombia a few years ago doing a tour with trade unionists and met families of trade unionists who had been slaughtered by paramilitaries at the behest of Coca-Cola. There's a lawsuit right now in the Florida courts with respect to that.

But one of the interesting things was about Coke's venture into the bottled water industry. Their brand name is Dasani. Dasani bottled water is tap water, literally, that goes through a little bit of voodoo water filtration that Coca-Cola claims—nothing particularly fancy. When I read it, I have to remind myself what suckers we are to be buying tap water in plastic bottles and paying more for it than we pay for fine wine, champagne, milk or orange juice. It's incredible. It's a mug's game. And there are some jurisdictions in the States—especially because Coca-Cola is big into buying off school boards. They'll give a particular school X thousands of dollars a year to have the exclusive rights to Coke in that school. Coca-Cola, like other soft drinks of its type, is called liquid sugar by the critics of them. There are jurisdictions in the States that have effectively banned Coca-Cola from their schools.

I know there was an effort here at Queen's Park by a very honourable member to attack the bottled water syndrome, but he, of course, was betrayed by his own colleagues. It was the most unpleasant sight. I was sitting here while that happened. I found it most unsavoury. It happened to be Liberal colleagues, so I suppose it wasn't unexpected. They turned on one of their own in a very embarrassing way. I supported the member. I supported his particular initiative, even though I felt there were some concerns in it, but I supported it because I wanted it to go to committee because I think he raised a very important issue.

Then we've got people like, God bless him, Sid Ryan, when he was still head of CUPE, travelling to municipalities and encouraging people not to use bottled water but to drink tap water because, for Pete's sake, it's a heck of a lot cheaper and, in most cases, it's far superior in terms of quality.

Some of the other stuff in this book, *The Coke Machine*, besides the Dasani water scam, was their experiences in, amongst other places, India, where they were building bottling plants, drilling down into the water table and consuming enough water that they were drying up farmers' wells—literally. They were marketing themselves as benefits to the local community—economic development. They're literally draining the water table and farmers are going out of business because they can't grow crops, because you need irrigation. They used up fresh water supplies. They "also produced solid waste that it distributed to local farmers as fertilizer. When the fields treated by this fertilizer began to lie fallow, and when farm animals that drank water polluted by this waste

began to die, Indian scientists discovered that Coke's solid waste contained four times the tolerable limit of cadmium, which can cause prostate and kidney cancer."

So the next time you see one of those—they've got all the kids on the hillside, and what's the song they sing? It's nice to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony?—think of the fact that Coke has been poisoning people throughout the world, killing people with its deadly product and slaughtering trade unionists by paramilitaries armed with guns and chainsaws. By the way, it's one of the favourite tactics used by paramilitaries in Colombia when they go after a progressive or a trade unionist. As I say, I encourage people to take a look at that book. I suspect it's probably in the Queen's Park library.

The other bit of reading today is Joe Warmington's column in the *Toronto Sun*. Warmington is a particularly compelling columnist—very capable, very competent, very readable and very clever. He truly is eclectic. When I talk about this bill as being a "sop," I think Joe Warmington addresses what this government is doing with legislation like this. He's commenting in today's column on Premier McGuinty's comment that "We have to make sure families can cope." So Warmington uses coping as a jumping-off point.

"So you'll help us cope?" he writes.

"How generous, Mr. Premier. Must have found some of that missing eHealth billion?"

"The truth is he"—McGuinty—"doesn't have a clue about how ... Ontario taxpayers," already \$19 billion in debt, "are coping."

"But he will find out next year." He's referring, of course, to the 2011 election.

He writes further, "McGuinty smirks like he's joking around on an episode of the Rick Mercer show. But there is no laugh track in Ontario these days."

"Meanwhile, do you think he does his laundry at 3 a.m. as he suggested Ontarians do to save money? Does he have any idea of what a disgrace it is asking people to do that in a province where people cradle every second they are not working, or in traffic, so they can cherish that little time with their families?"

"It's amazing because all of this comes from the mouth of a guy"—that's McGuinty—"who flies routinely to China on a carbon-emitting jet to negotiate away more of our jobs. If he knew anything about Ontario, he'd know what a vacant factory looks like. He should meet the people earning minimum wage, working at two jobs and using their credit cards to survive in a province he has made too expensive to cope in."

Now, Joe Warmington doesn't identify himself as a lefty by any stretch of the imagination, but he sounds downright red when he writes about the plight of working people in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, when he writes about the plight of families, when they do have wage earners, who have to work at two and three jobs and have to max out credit cards to pay daily bills and keep their heads above water.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Excuse me.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're excused, Mr. Ramal. It's no problem. It was a delight.

Here we've got a bill that merely sets aspirational levels. What does that mean? Are there concrete goals? Are there specific requirements in this legislation? Of course not. These are aspirational levels.

I fear and regret that we've reached that time where the Speaker's going to adjourn the House to 10:30 so that we can start question period. I'll be back, Speaker, and I'll finish this up when I am.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1018 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today Dr. Swarn Lata of Scarborough. Actually, she's the mother of my communications director. She has held various positions on the boards of non-profit organizations and also has a doctor's degree in music as well. We want to welcome her to the Legislature.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would like to welcome Huntsville and district of Muskoka councillor Fran Coleman to the Legislature. She's in the members' west gallery.

As well, Scott Rowe: Scott is the grandson of the Honourable William Earl Rowe, who was Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from 1963 until 1968.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to welcome, in the members' gallery, members of Trans Health and the Rainbow Health Network. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I am delighted to welcome the Dr. Fergal Nolan, president of the Radiation Safety Institute of Canada, sitting in the west gallery.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to take this opportunity to welcome to the Legislature the great kids of Gateway Public School in Flemingdon Park and their teachers, Mr. Wayne Belick and Mr. Peter Wiens. Welcome, and have a wonderful day.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would like to welcome two very infrequent guests to the Legislature. Stewart Kiff and Chris Watson are here with us today.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to acknowledge the presence of Ashley McKnight, Mary Campbell and Emily Schacht, who are all master's of social work students at Wilfrid Laurier University. They're here today to attend an event with the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition. Welcome.

Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm very proud to introduce to the House today Leah Morris and Rick Morris, who are here from Hamilton Mountain. Leah is the Ontario recipient of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the east members' gallery, I'd like introduce my constituent Lena Kalaycian. She's

completing her master's degree in public administration at the University of Ottawa.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to welcome two dedicated teachers from my constituency in Mississauga: John Solarski and Mat Solarski.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm very excited to introduce to the House today a singer-songwriter and very talented musician, Ron Nigrini; his lovely wife, Maryanna Nigrini; their daughter Melissa; and their son-in-law Jose Iguiniz Romero, who are here from Commanda, Ontario, and are big supporters of the Commanda Community Centre.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'd like everyone to welcome a friend of mine: the executive director of Community Living Essex County and an outstanding public servant, Nancy Wallace-Gero.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton and page Emily Hryb, to welcome Emily's mother, Jennifer Hryb, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Brant, I'd like to welcome Ralph Spoltore and José Marques to the east members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Premier. Experts agree that Premier McGuinty is the worst fiscal performer in Canada. Scotiabank says Premier McGuinty is taking Ontario families down a path to where we have fallen behind the rest of Canada. Statistics Canada shows that 41,000 Ontario families have lost private sector jobs since Premier McGuinty's HST took effect. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters say hundreds of thousands of Ontario families lost manufacturing jobs before the economic downturn. It's because you make energy social policy instead of economic policy. Don't Ontario families deserve better?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Obviously, I welcome the question, but I take issue with the negative, pessimistic and dark perspective brought by my honourable colleague. But I do share the bright, optimistic perspective from the MPP for Leeds-Grenville, who said, "Building future jobs in the renewable energy field is clearly the way to go."

The fact of the matter is, there's a tremendous amount of support within the official opposition for our energy policy. The fact of the matter is, we are creating jobs throughout the province, including in many of their ridings, and they are more than willing, of course, to attend those opening events and to help us celebrate those new jobs that we're bringing to their ridings.

Whether you're talking about the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton, the MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk or the MPP for Leeds-Grenville, they understand how important it is

to find ways to support our policy to create clean energy for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: It's not only the experts at Scotiabank who say Premier McGuinty is dragging Ontario families down the wrong path. Experts at the Bank of Canada say the same thing. Toronto Dominion Bank warns that the size of your deficits relative to the size of the economy makes Ontario worse off than it was when the NDP were the government. The C.D. Howe Institute warns that your spending and debt leave no wiggle room if factors like interest rates change. Yet Premier McGuinty spends \$2.1 million more than he collects in revenue every hour of every day. He just shrugs when his wage freeze plan has gone badly off the rails. Why don't you believe that Ontario families deserve better?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We know that in fact there are many within the official opposition who support our clean energy plan and particularly the clean jobs that are coming with that.

I also suspect that there are some within the official opposition who support the \$3.4 billion that we invested in the auto sector. I know that the leader called it corporate welfare, but we disagree with that approach. In fact, there are 400,000 jobs across the province that are connected with the auto sector.

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Here's what Export Development Canada said just yesterday: "There were many who considered Ontario exports a writeoff a few months ago, but the auto sector has experienced a remarkable about-face, and exports of industrial goods are also in the double-digit growth zone. Ontario auto production has strengthened enough to spur significant new investments in the sector."

The fact of the matter is that the auto sector has turned around, and we are proud to be there for them and with them in the darkest hour.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: Economists agree that Premier McGuinty is Canada's worst economic manager. Dr. Livio Di Matteo points out that, while you try to confuse families into thinking the financial crisis is to blame, "The fact remains that Ontario's performance is the worst of all 10 provinces," and Ontario's economy has declined every year you've been in office.

Dr. Michael Veall of McMaster points out that despite Ontario families paying more because of the HST, your record deficits will leave our children with a net debt of \$20,000 per person. No wonder the Fraser Institute ranks Premier McGuinty as Canada's worst Premier in comparison to all others.

When will Premier McGuinty understand that Ontario families want change?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague and his colleagues in the official opposition would like to have Ontarians believe that somehow the global economic recession developed inside our govern-

ment, but I just don't think Ontarians buy that. They know that we were hit and hit hard, particularly because we are the centre of manufacturing in Ontario. They know that we have done everything we could; we're stimulating the economy to the tune of \$28 billion. They see the new roads, bridges, hospitals, courthouses and schools in their own communities. They understand that that has created some 300,000 jobs at a very difficult time.

I know that my friends opposite like to pretend that there's nothing that needed doing. The fact of the matter is that in the face of recession we've made investments. That has entailed a significant deficit, and we'll continue to work with Ontarians to find a way out of that. But in their hour of need, we're there for Ontarians by stimulating their economy.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier: Ontario families agree with the experts. They watch helplessly while Premier McGuinty spends \$2.1 million more every hour of every day than he collects in revenue and adds more and more to the debt he will leave our children. That's not how they run the family budget; why is it how you run the provincial budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm having to restrain her, Speaker.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: You're teasing me, Premier. Why are you teasing me?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate the question from my colleague opposite. There was a specific opportunity that we gave the official opposition to show their true colours when it comes to managing government expenses. We said that we wanted to cut the price of generic drugs in half. We wanted to save Ontario taxpayers half a billion dollars that would go to the bottom line. We gave them the opportunity to support our government and, more importantly, to support Ontario families and taxpayers. There are more than a million Ontarians who pay for their generic drugs out of pocket; they don't have a plan of any kind.

When push came to shove, they decided they were not going to stand with Ontario families, they were not going to stand with Ontario taxpayers; they decided to stand with big money. So once again, there's a revelation—an occasional revelation but an important revelation—as to where their real priorities lie.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: What the Premier doesn't understand is that Ontario families need a chance to catch up, but what Premier McGuinty and his team sincerely believe is that Ontario families have some infinite ability to pay for all of his expensive experiments, which is why he did not stop Disney cast members from training LHINs on quality service; Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga from converting a garage to an emergency room; ultrasounds for dogs in Peterborough hospital; \$7,800 for a hospital consultant's vacation in Japan; Christmas luncheons and bonuses for health consultants; and dinner and drinks for hospital consultants.

What makes you think Ontario families should have to pay for all the cheats you simply will not stop?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think what's important today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Order. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important to note that yesterday, we sat with members opposite in the estimates committee. We had an opportunity to talk about the Ontario economy. What was so informative for all of us was that the members of the official opposition actually agreed that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is doing a tremendous job in selling Ontario to the world. They said openly, "We agree." When we showed examples at committee yesterday of the kind of innovation that the Ontario government, partners with our Ontario companies, creates and takes to the world, this particular member, my official critic, said, "We agree."

I think that should speak loudly to the people of Ontario, who want good jobs so that they can afford to live in the lifestyle that they choose. But that member opposite needs to be—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yesterday, the minister did agree that she is the grande dame of the theatre. I want to tell you that.

Ontario families need a chance to catch up, but what this Premier offers them when he backtracks on his expensive energy experiments is to take \$1 billion from their own pockets to pay them a hydro bribe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw that.

Only an out-of-touch Premier as this one is would think that because the deficit is \$19 billion instead of \$20 billion, he has \$1 billion to play with. It's kind of like a guy who's overdue on his rent, has maxed out his credit card and owes his friends and family money, but when he finds 50 bucks in an old jacket, he goes out and blows it on a round of beer for his buddies.

You wouldn't put up with a friend who acts that way. What makes you think Ontario families should put up with it from a Premier?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think Ontario families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East. Member from Lanark. Member from Halton. Member from Durham. Member from Lanark. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think what's really important is that people are going to want to know, and they will hear this afternoon, that in fact our deficit is going to come out 25% lower than what we anticipated. Even these members opposite are going to say that that's good news for Ontario and good news for Ontario families.

To this individual, who is my official critic for the economy here in Ontario: We're going to say that small businesses are going to look forward to the kinds of support that they have been seeing—they, in fact, have received cheques since last week to support them through the transition—when we changed a tax policy that helps small business, when we're seeing a 20% decrease in the corporate income tax for small business. Surely that member opposite has to support this.

My big question today is going to be, when they hear what is in that economic statement today, will that party support the government position that is going to see clear help, not just for everyday—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty government has made a lot of promises recently to Ontario families. They promised the HST wouldn't cause any harm, but people are paying more. They promised that business tax cuts would create 600,000 new jobs, but 34,000 people have lost their jobs since July 1.

Given the Premier's track record of spinning fairy tales, why should people believe today's promises?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was perhaps being overly optimistic, but I thought that when the leader of the third party had the first opportunity to be in this House subsequent to some rumours about the contents of our fall economic statement, she might want to stand in her place and congratulate us and thank us for doing the kind of thing that she has been asking us to do for a long time. Perhaps during her supplementary, she will want to take the opportunity to do that.

The fact of the matter is, and I'll speak to this a good length in my coming answers, we have a lengthy record of assistance to Ontario families. I look forward to speaking to that.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier said that his \$2-billion corporate tax giveaway would create jobs, but 34,000 families have lost a job since those tax breaks kicked in. He said Ontario's recovery is near, but economists are forecasting a long, long period of very slow growth. And he said that the HST would make life better, but people are paying more to turn on the lights and keep their homes warm.

Why should Ontario families believe the Premier when his remedies, to date, have only caused more pain?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can't share the same bleak outlook, but I thought it'd be appropriate today for me to recite a little bit of a chronology in terms of the supports that we've put in place for Ontario families and the very consistent position taken by the NDP to oppose each and every one of these.

Three years ago we put in place the Ontario child benefit; it's now \$1,100 per child, and they opposed that. A year and a half ago it was the seniors' property tax grant—we doubled it to \$500; a personal income tax cut—that's \$400 a family for mom and dad; a sales tax credit benefiting nearly three million Ontarians—for a family, it's \$1,040, and they opposed all of that. Then there are HST transition payments; the second payment is going to be delivered this December. It's \$1,000 for a family—they opposed that again.

Each and every time we put forward a specific, substantive measure to benefit families, they stand in the way against that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Across Ontario families are struggling. Paying the bills is still getting harder. The number of Ontarians out of work has grown by more than 30% since the start of the recession two years ago. The Premier's response has only made life more expensive and dampened the economic outlook for this province.

After years of not listening, why should families believe that the Premier is suddenly on their side?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I talked about what we did three years ago; I talked about what we did a year and a half ago; now I'll talk about what we did six months ago. At that time, we put in place the northern Ontario energy credit—that's \$200 a family; the energy and property tax credit—that's \$1,025 for seniors. We cut the price of generic drugs in half. There are over a million Ontarians who are paying for their drugs out of pocket—they opposed all those provisions. Two months ago, the children's activity tax credit: \$50 per child, \$100 for a two-child family. And then there's full-day kindergarten: for parents of four- and five-year-olds, they're saving hundreds, if not thousands of dollars, on half-day child care.

Again, I say, so that my honourable colleague will hear me, every single time we have put forward a specific, substantive measure to ease things a little bit for Ontario families, they have stood in the way of that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. I would just offer a suggestion: The Minister of Economic Development and the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, as there's been questions and answers going on, seem to be having a side discussion. I think it would be much better for all members of this House and our guests that instead of having that shouting discussion across the floor, it would be much easier for them to step outside and talk face-to-face quietly to one another.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In September, we launched a campaign to have the HST taken off the hydro bills. We urged families that were struggling with their bills to join the effort. All told, 60,000 people signed the petition we started just six

weeks ago. Together, we sent a very powerful message: Families need relief from the growing cost of living.

People have seen permanent hikes to their hydro bills. On behalf of these people, I'd like to ask: Will the Premier's hydro relief be permanent or just a short-term measure?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We look forward to delivering the particulars of the support that we'll be providing to families when it comes to their electricity bills.

I agree with the leader of the NDP that it's important that we find ways to support families in these lean times, and specifically with respect to their electricity bills. We agree in that area.

What I'd like to have is the agreement of the leader of the NDP when it comes to our determination to move ahead and put in place clean energy. I'd like to have her agreement that it's important that we shut down coal-fired generation in Ontario. I'd like to have her agreement that doing that is good for our health, but especially for the health of our children. I'd like to have her agreement in each and every one of those measures, because there was a time when I did have that agreement, but of late, I have not.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We've been telling the stories of families from across Ontario, families that are facing challenges, like paying the bills or finding a job, families like Helen Crabbe's, who writes, "Please do not allow the HST to remain on our hydro bills. Please help us."

New Democrats have been listening to Ontario families since the very beginning, and it seems the Premier is finally starting to prick up his ears. Why does he only start listening, though, when an election is looming?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just cited 10 separate instances, 10 separate legislative initiatives that provided specific support to families and, in each every and instance, the leader of the NDP and her party have voted against those.

Here's something else which frankly surprises me. Recently, I was in Hamilton, in fact in the leader of the NDP's very riding. I was there with JNE Consulting, who had entered into a joint venture with a Chinese company that I'd met with on my recent trip to China. They've decided to work together to create 300 jobs in Hamilton in the clean energy sector. That's good news for Hamilton. It's part and parcel of our clean energy policy, and it would be nice to have the leader of the NDP's support for that specific measure insofar at least as it benefits the people in her riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is giving with one hand and taking with the other. The HST on hydro is just plain wrong; it should be scrapped. That would offer permanent relief, real relief for families in this province. Ontario families, in fact, agree. Why is the Premier refusing, then, to offer this kind of permanent relief?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, the leader of the NDP has been talking about this for quite some time. I've

told her that we are in agreement that we need to do something, and we look forward to articulating in some detail the specific support we'll be providing to families shortly in this Legislature.

Beyond that, again, I would ask the leader of the NDP to give some real consideration to supporting our plan to bring more clean energy to the province of Ontario. It's good for our economy because it creates new jobs, including the jobs we've put into her riding. It's good for our health. We learned some five years ago by means of a study that dirty coal is costing our health system nearly \$3 billion. There are premature deaths and all kinds of increased rates of hospitalization and lung problems, especially in children.

Of course, the other thing we're doing through our energy plan is, we're creating more energy to ensure that we have a reliable supply, which is especially important for the manufacturing sector in Hamilton. Again, I'd ask the leader of the NDP for support.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. It appears the Minister of Energy's dire prognosis of crumbling hydro meter syndrome is not the most ridiculous statement to come out of the mouth of a McGuinty Liberal this week. The Premier's denial that electoral politics were behind his latest hydro rate cut backtrack takes the cake.

Having raised hydro rates 75% since taking office, have you really become so out of touch that you think Ontario families are going to believe and fall for your latest attempt to confuse them with your hydro bribe?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's just more in a series of misinformation that comes out of that side of the House when it comes to not wanting to tell the whole story.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We'll start with the Minister of Energy withdrawing his comment.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Okay, Mr. Speaker, I'll withdraw that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Davenport will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Mr. Speaker, of course I withdraw the comment. I'm sorry about that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East is not being helpful to the functioning of this chamber.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As usual, the member opposite is not accurate in his assessment of this situation, nor is he even close. But accuracy is not something, I think, that that party has been very used to bringing forward when it

comes to these issues, and I'll tell you why: because they don't want Ontarians to know the facts about what went on in the energy sector. They don't want Ontarians to know just how far behind we were when we took this portfolio over. They don't want Ontarians to know that when they were in power, we lost 1,800 megawatts of power, like running Niagara Falls dry. They don't want Ontarians to know that under their watch, the use of coal went up 127%. They don't want Ontarians to know that we're doing everything we can—

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier McGuinty has backtracked so often on the plans his team has come up with that it's impossible for Ontario families to know where he stands. What they do know is this: Every time he backtracks, Premier McGuinty uses Ontario families to pay for the mess that he and his team have created.

He has made Ontario families pay for his backtracks on eco taxes, the Oakville power plant, his public sector wage freeze plan—that was really good—the HST and the child tax credit. He's at it again with his latest hydro handout, something his finance minister and Liberal insiders say is just the beginning of a whole lot more backtracking and electioneering to come, with taxpayer giveaways.

Which of your long-held convictions will you be putting up for sale next week?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I don't need the assistance. I have enough armchair Speakers at home who like to send me emails, and I appreciate them.

I would just remind all members in this House that, yes, the opposition has a role to play, as the government has a role to play, but we have to ensure that we ask our questions in a manner that is not in any way being derogatory or taking shots at other members. I do take some exception to the comment that the honourable member just made at the end of his last question and would just ask him to withdraw it, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Our energy policy is all about Ontario families. It's about building a strong, reliable, clean and modern system for Ontario families to run their homes, for Ontario families to run their businesses, for Ontario families to engage in the economic development that's going on, and building a budding clean energy economy here in this province. It's all about those families. We're working with those families.

We are one of the first governments in a very long time in this province to be very honest with Ontario families. We cannot build that stronger, more reliable, cleaner system of energy without making important investments. But we're going to stand with those Ontario families. We're going to help them through this trans-

ition. We will not bring those Ontario families back to the condition you left them in seven years ago. We're going to move proudly forward with a modern, clean, reliable energy system, and we're going to do it standing with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have a question for the Premier. Just over a year ago, the McGuinty government released a report saying that the HST and corporate tax cuts would create 600,000 new jobs, but since the new tax came into effect on July 1, more than 30,000 Ontarians have lost their jobs. How much longer should Ontarians wait before the Premier admits that his jobs plan is nothing more than an expensive flop?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important to note that a member of the NDP was also at estimates yesterday, when we had hours to discuss the Ontario economy, and a very pertinent fact is important to put in the House today: Our American counterparts have seen a 10% renewal of the jobs that they lost pre-recession, compared to a 75% increase in jobs back to the levels that we had before the recession. These are really important figures, so that we can show how we compare to jurisdictions that we actually trade with. Some 80% of our trade is with these jurisdictions in the US.

It's important to note that again yesterday the member for the NDP came to really talk about how terribly the automotive sector was doing.

Let me say that Chrysler alone, year after year, in the last two years, has seen a 30% increase in sales in Canada alone. This is the kind of renewal that we're seeing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, back to the Premier: Unemployment now is still more than 30% higher than it was at the beginning of the recession, and the number of people without a job is up more than 60% since October 2007. The Premier's so-called plan, the HST and corporate tax giveaways, drove up the cost of living for families while creating a \$2-billion annual hole in the treasury.

How can the Premier say his plan is working when people are paying more, too many are still out of work and the economic outlook is so grim?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me say this—and we've been up front with the people of Ontario: Ontario had it tougher than any province in the country during the last worldwide recession. We knew, because we are the heartland of industry for the country, that that means the work that we can do as a government, counting on support from even opposition parties for some of our initiatives—when we talk about the advanced manufacturing strategy that just in its program alone created 5,200 new jobs—that's like two Toyota plants in Ontario—our

expectation is that the NDP would support these kinds of initiatives exactly when our economy needs it, exactly when we as a government can help lever the kinds of investments that that program alone brought to the province. We expect the NDP to support new jobs in this province. We expect them to support the economic statement that's going to be tabled in the House later today.

MEDICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Minister, this week you announced a \$15-million investment in the Ontario Brain Institute at Baycrest hospital here in Toronto. The Alzheimer Society of Ontario says that 181,000 Ontarians are currently living with dementia and another 255,000 Ontarians will be affected in their lifetime by 2020.

There is already a great deal of research taking place in Ontario that is contributing to a knowledge-based economy and bringing Ontario to the forefront of research and innovation. For example, the Rotman Research Institute at Baycrest hospital is considered one of the top five neuroscience research facilities in the world. Minister, how will this new institute help Ontario reduce health costs brought about by our aging population, and will this investment create some jobs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I first want to set the record straight. Rather than closing 28 hospitals, like the party opposite, we have built 19. And more than that, as my friend knows, we have used the platform of the brilliance of our doctors and researchers through this brain institute to create the most innovative and exciting research solutions to Alzheimer's and brain cancer. This is life-saving research.

The party opposite wants to shut down this whole process by taking \$3 billion out of our health care system in research, shutting our hospitals, taking jobs away, and robbing seniors of much-needed solutions. We will offer our seniors the best available services in research in the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: When announcements like this are made, my constituents often ask me how one comes to the decision that investments like this in the institute are necessary. That's in the context of Ontario families carefully managing their money. They want to be sure that the government does the same with their hard-earned dollars. Ontario is going through some of the most difficult economic times since the Great Depression, and this is a significant \$15-million investment of the taxpayers.

How can my Willowdale constituents and other Ontarians be sure that this investment in the Ontario Brain Institute at Sunnybrook is good value for the taxpayers?

1110

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Unlike the party opposite, we are not afraid of the world or that Ontario can compete with the very best.

As a matter of fact, let me share with my friend. This process began in 2008. Toronto businessman and my friend Joseph Rotman and Dr. Martin, dean of Harvard Medical School, began investigating the possibility of creating the brain institute here in Ontario. They established a council that consulted with more than 70 neuroscientists across Ontario and 50 leading experts. I can't think of a government that did that kind of due diligence on anything previous to us getting elected. The council released a report, and when our Premier met with President Peres, he pitched us because even in Israel, they knew that we in Ontario were their best allies and researchers. We've done the due diligence on money, we're leveraging private sector investment, we have international partners and we will be a leader in curing diseases as one in four Ontarians become over the age of 65—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Toronto District School Board is proposing to pay students for getting good grades; a very curious strategy, given the government's decision to do away with grades and report cards. When the minister was asked whether she agrees that Ontario families should be paying students cash for good grades, she refused to oppose the strategy, saying it is up to the board.

In light of today's fiscal update, which I think again is going to show that the government continues to pile up massive deficits, I would ask the minister: Would you be prepared to claw back the money the board thinks it can afford to waste like this and instead reinvest it in front-line education for at-risk students?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I don't believe that this is the way to go in terms of supporting student achievement. This government has been very clear: We believe the very best way to support student achievement is to have a qualified teacher in a classroom, not on a picket line; that was the strategy used by the previous government. We have hired teachers. We have invested in good places to grow. As a result, since coming to government, student achievement is up. Class sizes are down. Graduation rates are up. We have increased our investment in education by 40%. We have focused on literacy and numeracy, and our investments and our faith in the front-line people in our education system have paid off, and students are more successful. When they were in government, one out of four students dropped out.

I'm happy to say—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The issue is this cash for grades. So far, the minister hasn't indicated that she is prepared to put a stop to the waste of this taxpayer money. Until the Premier backtracked at the last minute,

the minister had no difficulty telling boards that they were to implement the sex education curriculum. It was also no problem telling boards to ban chocolate milk. Also, there was a hands-off approach to the sexual orientation survey in Ottawa, and now the privacy commissioner has weighed into that issue.

However, when it comes to this issue of cash for grades—and the research tells us that's not the solution—the minister has deferred to the boards. What is it going to take for the minister to ensure that the priorities of hard-working Ontario families are addressed?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We've made it very clear: We don't support that idea. We have listened to what the people of Ontario told us. They made it very clear: They were not in support of public dollars going to private schools. We settled that. We're not in favour of that at all. That was a commitment made by the previous government.

We are investing in our schools and our students. We are investing in classrooms and hiring teachers. We are focusing on literacy and numeracy, and our student achievement has gone up. Class sizes have gone down. Graduation rates have increased. Students are improving. That is the way we believe we need to continue to invest in student achievement.

We have received results. There is more to do. We are continuing to work with our school boards and with families to support their initiatives. They have been very clear and they are satisfied that we are working with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Attorney General. November 20 is trans remembrance day, and I am joined today by members of Trans Health and Rainbow Health in the gallery. New Democrats have tabled Toby's Act (Right to be Free from Discrimination and Harassment Because of Gender Identity) three times in this House. When will the McGuinty government bring forward its own legislation to make sure that gender identity is included in the Ontario Human Rights Code?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm sure I join all members in the Legislature in welcoming members of the community to the Legislature. This government has no tolerance for discrimination. We have no tolerance for discrimination based on transphobia. The Human Rights Code protects the transsexual and transgendered community. The decisions are clear: It extends the protection. The message that we want to make sure everybody knows is that protection is there for you if you need it. To anyone even thinking of discriminating on this basis: Don't. It's against the law. It's against the protections of the code.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Attorney General should know that non-specified rights do not hold up. The Alberta Supreme Court has already ruled on that. That's why there's a growing outcry for such legislation.

Ontario Human Rights Commissioner Barbara Hall herself supports our bill and wrote a letter to the Toronto Star calling for gender identity to be added to the Ontario Human Rights Code. Economic data shows that 97% of trans Ontarians face employment discrimination, 50% live below the poverty line and 41% attempt suicide.

The McGuinty government can help end this discrimination by bringing forward legislation. When will it finally have the political courage to do so?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We have legislation; it's called the Human Rights Code. The decisions are clear. Those of the transsexual and transgendered communities are protected.

We want to be very clear: It is not helpful to suggest in any way, shape or form that there's some challenge to the existing protections. There is not. The protections are there for those who need them. To those who think that they can discriminate: Do not. The law prohibits it. The decisions are clear. The protections exist. We reject all forms of discrimination in this province.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, my constituents in the riding of Davenport are very conscious of the ongoing construction along the Georgetown GO corridor to accommodate the air-rail link, a key transportation connection between Pearson airport and Union Station.

I'm having a stream of constituents coming to my office concerned about their local environment. Understandably, people want to make sure they live in a safe, clean environment. They want their government to ensure it does everything it can to keep the air we breathe clean.

We know that in May 2009, Metrolinx announced that it is going to study the electrification of the entire GO Transit rail system as a future alternative to diesel trains currently in service. Would the Minister of Transportation, in light of my constituents' concerns, give us an update on the electrification study that Metrolinx is doing right now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for Davenport for his advocacy. I know that he is as enthusiastic as I am about reducing gridlock, improving air quality and getting people out of their cars and onto transit.

As he mentioned, Metrolinx is currently studying electrification. It's a very inclusive study. It looks at capacity and service impacts, environment and health, community and land use, economic impacts and system costs. I will be reviewing that study once it's completed and once it's submitted to me.

What I want the member for Davenport and his constituents to know and be clear about is that the Georgetown South corridor infrastructure is being built to be capable of converting to electrification. That's what we're doing. All the bridges and structures and all the grade separations will be designed to meet the greater height

requirements for electrification. Track spacing is being designed to allow for the foundations. Signal systems are being upgraded to allow for an electrified train system. It's not a matter of whether we go electric; it's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary? The member from York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: The constituents in Davenport and my constituents in York South–Weston will be glad to know that the study is moving forward and that Metrolinx will be building ready for electrification. My constituents want to continue to be consulted on this important issue, and I will continue to advocate on their behalf.

Earlier this week we learned that Metrolinx is now in the process of acquiring the vehicles that will run on the air-rail link. My constituents are very concerned about the type of trains that will run on this corridor right in their backyard, and there is still much discussion about dirty diesel trains. Can the minister update this House on the vehicles for the air-rail link?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to be clear that the shuttles that will be running on the air-rail link will meet the stringent tier 4 diesel emissions standards. Those emissions standards—that diesel doesn't exist yet. It's being created as the cleanest diesel that will be available. Those shuttles will meet those requirements.

The reason that we're doing this is because we want this air-rail link ready for the Pan Am Games in 2015. That air-rail link is part of the bid book. It needs to be ready.

We're going to be working with Metrolinx, obviously. They're entering into negotiations with Sumitomo Corp. to purchase the 18 diesel multiple units. These are convertible units, so these can be converted from diesel to electric units.

The public engagement process has been very comprehensive. The terms of reference were established in conjunction with the community, so the community—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. A couple of weeks ago, late in October, you announced amendments to the badly flawed growth plan for the Simcoe area. You asked for feedback by January 31, 2011. I have to tell you: That date is ridiculous, and it's completely unreasonable. You know that there are many changes on municipal councils, and new councils need time to adjust. They need at least a six-month extension for the feedback on a plan that will be in place—this is on a plan that will be in place for 2031. The end of January is completely unreasonable.

Premier McGuinty sat on the plan for two years with no good reason to hold it up. Will you, Minister, extend the January 31, 2011, deadline by a minimum of six months?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. The member will know that there was a very extensive consultation process that took place over a period of almost two years. We did issue a proposed amendment, and the proposed amendment will have a 90-day, a three-month period for additional consultation. We believe that's an adequate period of time given how much consulting we had done previously. There has been tremendous pressure from the community, from Simcoe county, to move quickly on the development because, yes, it has been held up too long. What the member is now asking for is for that development to be held up that much longer. We're not prepared to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, one would wonder why you would leave it until the writ period of a municipal election. You know councils are not even sworn in until the week of December 1—well, maybe you don't know that. December 1 is when they're sworn in. Your scheme gives them two short months to sort through the plan and get approval for feedback.

After sitting on this plan for two years, you decide to rush amendments at a time when councils are in the lame duck position, and the Christmas season falls immediately after. There's no rush for the amendments. There has been no consultation with the new councils. A deadline extension to the end of July 2011, is completely reasonable. Why are the McGuinty Liberals standing by this sham of a process?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to know what alarm clock woke this member up. He's had all kinds of opportunities to raise this issue with me previously—that's number 1. Throughout the whole process of the Simcoe consultation, throughout the whole current process of considering the amendment that has been released, this member has done absolutely nothing in terms of engagement.

We have consulted extensively. We're consulting over a period of three months. I'm getting very, very positive feedback from many of the municipal councillors. Many of the municipal councillors have indicated, including mayors, that they are very satisfied with the process to date. We will have a final answer at the end of January.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier: I was in Windsor yesterday, where I met with a couple of city councillors. Windsor's council unanimously passed a motion calling for the HST to be taken off essentials like hydro. Why won't the Premier take the HST off hydro and give Windsor families a break?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, and I know that my honourable colleague is going to commend us when she sees the particulars of the support that we're going to be announcing through our fall economic statement.

I know that the Windsor council gave some thought to this, but what I would say to councils around the prov-

ince is to give some thought to what their local distribution companies might do. We're going to be doing something now to benefit Ontario ratepayers, those folks who receive electricity bills and make payment on them. We're going to be doing something here, as a government, in terms of something that's within our control, but we'd ask the municipal councils as well to take a look at what they might do, especially those who have local distribution companies over which they have specific responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Windsor has been hit hard by job losses. The unemployment rate is nearly 11% and 1,500 people lost their jobs just last month. Families are having a very difficult time making ends meet.

Will Windsor families see permanent solutions to sky-high hydro bills from their government today, or desperate, short-term promises that expire when the votes are counted?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've had a lot of opportunity to debate electricity policy in here. We're introducing a new measure here and it will be revealed shortly, through the finance minister, in the fall economic statement.

I appreciate the political perspective that my honourable colleague brings to this—in fact, that's a very important part of her responsibility—but I think it's really important to keep in mind the perspective of the Ontario family. I think what we're announcing today will be received as good news. It will be seen as such: good news. They'll be looking forward to this particular measure taking effect and having a specific impact on their electricity bills. That's fundamentally what this is all about.

I thought that there might be a consensus in this House that we need to do something that is received as good news by Ontario families, and I believe fully that's exactly what we're doing today.

NORTHERN ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. David Oraziatti: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Minister, while we have not fully recovered from the significant downturn in the economy, we are making progress. The effects of the recession in northern Ontario have been particularly challenging, but I'm aware that your ministry is working in partnership with businesses and industry to grow job opportunities in the north through the northern Ontario growth plan. Provincial support for the Huron Central Railway, St. Marys Paper and the Terrace Bay pulp and paper mill are great examples of the investments and the commitment our government has demonstrated to ensure workers and their families in the north have the opportunity to succeed.

Minister, as you know, it's important that we continue to attract investment in the north. Can you tell us what you're doing to promote investment and economic development in northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question, and there's indeed some good news that's coming out of northern Ontario.

I think it's fair to say our government policies and our Open Ontario plan have positioned our province to remain the number-one jurisdiction in Canada for investment, particularly in the mining sector. Yesterday, that came home in a very significant way when the CEO of Vale Canada announced a five-year investment program for Ontario and for Canada. In Ontario alone, Vale announced it will be spending \$3.4 billion to upgrade mining and processing facilities here. That includes a number of positive pieces of news: \$360 million towards the Totten Mine. This will be the first new Vale mine in Sudbury in almost 40 years. It's expected to begin production in 2011, creating 130 jobs.

Let me also give a bit of thanks to our colleague the MPP for Sudbury for the hard work and advocacy he's done on behalf of that. He knows what good news this is for Sudbury and all of northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziatti: Minister, Vale's decision to invest in Ontario is certainly great news for our economy and for the families that will benefit from these jobs. Vale is making these investments in Sudbury, a city that has been built on the success of mineral exploration and development. It makes sense that companies would want to invest there. It's clear that Vale's investment will also have a positive impact on all of northern Ontario, including First Nation communities.

Minister, we know it's important to create an encouraging climate for investment. How are you working to ensure that all northerners will participate in strengthening our economy?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's just a great question. Again, the good news is continuing to come out of northern Ontario. Another recent investment was made by Northgate Minerals Corp. They opened up the Young-Davidson mine, and they worked very closely with the Matachewan First Nation and got an impact benefit agreement in place. Early in September, my colleague for Timiskaming-Cochrane, Mr. Ramsay, and I were celebrating a groundbreaking ceremony for this extraordinary operation. Again, \$1.5 billion will be invested in that mine and the life of the mine—600 jobs in terms of construction, 275 jobs in long-term employment. This is great news. We've got the potential opening of the largest gold mine in North America, Detour Gold—great news; and the Lac des Iles operation, North American Palladium, outside Thunder Bay, reopened with 180 new jobs—good news. The number one investment jurisdiction in Canada is here in Ontario, and it will continue to be.

1130

RAIL LINE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I've recently written you on

the situation regarding the Canadian Pacific line running from Smiths Falls to Mattawa, known as the Ottawa Valley Railway.

Earlier this year, Canadian Pacific announced that it was going to discontinue service on the line and look to sell it. This initiated several possibilities, one of them being the federal government purchasing the line. The federal government's option expired on November 5, and they've decided against exercising that option.

The province has now until December 6 to exercise their option and purchase the line, thereby keeping this vital link open. Minister, will the province be exercising their option and purchasing this line?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member opposite for the question. It gives me a chance to talk about a very important issue. It's a federal issue, but it is a very important issue.

I think the member opposite understands that in the case of some of the other short rail lines that we've been involved with, we don't own those lines. Those are owned by private operators. Without a federal partner, without the federal government stepping up and having a plan for dealing with these rail lines when a company like CP walks away from a piece of line—the federal government needs to understand that that is their responsibility, in my opinion.

I have met with the short rail folks, and I believe that the only sustainable solution is to have the federal government work with the people who need these lines and make sure that they are in place.

I appreciate the question, but I really think he needs to talk to his federal counterpart about what the solution is.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: All across the Ottawa Valley, stakeholders and municipal governments have voiced their deep concern over the possibility that this line could close. This is the last east-west alternative for cross-country trains hoping to bypass the very congested Toronto corridor. If the line is closed, east-west rail traffic is going to have to go through this very congested Toronto corridor. You could be the last hope to save the line and, with it, improve the economic prospects in the Ottawa Valley.

Minister, I would ask that you would exercise this option prior to December 6 or, at least, that you would sit down with your federal counterpart, the minister in the federal government, to work out some sort of solution to keep this vital transportation link open.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: A few weeks ago, some of you may have seen the celebrations around the 125th anniversary of the pounding in of the last spike. There's a lot of emotional and historical energy around rail and Canada. It's a federal responsibility. It's up to the federal government to make sure that we have that network of rail lines across the province.

I think that there's a lot of work that needs to be done. That's why I say I'm very happy that the member has raised the issue, because it's something that we need to work on as a country, and the federal government needs

to take that responsibility. So I hope the member opposite will go back to his counterpart.

I have actually raised this issue with the new federal Minister of Transport. He knows that it is an issue. I think it is something that has to be talked about in the context of a national transportation strategy, like we have to talk about the continental gateway strategy. All of that needs to be part of a national transportation strategy, and we need the Prime Minister to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Two weeks ago, I raised in the House the issue that people in northern Ontario are being restricted from getting access to forest roads in northern Ontario. At that time, you said that you're doing great work working with tourist outfitters, and that's raised quite an ire of protest from people in northern Ontario. It's been brought to my attention that, apparently, there are former and current MNR employees who are actually in the outfitters business, setting the rules in order to restrict access to the forest while, at the same time, being employees of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Now, you know that subsection 39(1) of the Public Lands Act says, "No person holding an office in or under the ministry and no person employed in or under the ministry shall, directly or indirectly, purchase any right, title or interest in any public lands...." If this is the case, what are you prepared to do about it?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm really pleased to have another opportunity to talk about some of our northern outfitters and some of our northern recreational industry opportunities. I didn't get a chance to elaborate on it the last time as much as I would have liked to—because certainly we have a long history of providing service in the north, and the business climate, and encouraging investments in northern Ontario.

Many of our staff in the north work very hard to make sure that there are wonderful opportunities. I think many people in the south don't think there are recreational opportunities in the north once the summer ends. I want to encourage them to visit the north, to visit those remote locations, and see the great opportunities.

We've been working with NOTOA, particularly. They've been a great partner in working with our government. Certainly, our ministry employees are seized with the opportunity to elaborate and engage people in traveling to the north to visit those locations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, you don't even get it. The point of the question is, there's an allegation by people in northern Ontario that your staff, staff of MNR, have purchased or had crown land leased to them; that they're benefiting from that land; that they're setting the rules to protect the land so they're able to run their own businesses and bring tourists in while keeping local residents out.

You're not the Minister of Tourism; you're the Minister of Natural Resources. I'm asking you, what are you going to do in order to investigate this and, if so, take corrective action?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm not going to speculate on some of the assumptions and allegations that are made by the other member, but I would like to assure Ontario residents that we have some wonderful areas in Ontario's north, and those crown lands are available for recreational purposes.

We want to make sure that people get to use those parks, whether they come in and fly in or they portage in. I get letters all the time from people who fish and hunt in the north about how excited they are. We have a lot of people from outside of Ontario coming to visit. It's a critical part of our economy to make sure that the north is strong, that we provide those recreational opportunities and that we engage people to see the wonderful asset we have in northern Ontario. This industry brings a lot of jobs to northerners, and I think this contributes to the overall economy.

It's something we're excited about. It's something we're engaged about. And we want to ensure that the experience is enjoyed by as many Ontarians and people outside of Ontario as possible.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, it's clear that when you support a woman's ability to achieve economic independence, you also support her family and the community by extension. While we acknowledge the important progress that has been made over time, we know that there is more we can do to help women attain greater economic security. Women's organizations across our great province are doing that important work every day in this area, and I believe that this government has a significant role to play in supporting women across Ontario and, indeed, in Peterborough. What is our government doing to help women achieve this economic security?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased that the member from Peterborough, a real champion of his community and particularly women in his community, has asked the question today.

Our government knows that helping women achieve economic security means that we improve their lives, we strengthen Ontario's economy, and we improve the lives of the next generation, their children.

Access to affordable child care is a priority for women, allowing them to enter and advance in the workforce. That's why our government has created 22,000 new licensed child care spaces since 2003 and why we stepped in with \$63.5 million to fill the federal gap when the federal government stepped away.

This September, as we rolled out full-day kindergarten—over 35,000 four- and five-year-olds going into school—many mothers across the province no longer had to choose between their jobs and families.

We've increased the OCB, and we are investing thousands and thousands of dollars right across the province to help low-income women gain the skills that they need to make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. David Zimmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the first part of my question to the Minister of Research and Innovation, I described the Ontario Brain Institute as being located at Baycrest. In fact, it is located at Sunnybrook. I did correct that in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is a point of order, and the member does have the right to correct his record.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Simcoe North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Infrastructure concerning the Simcoe growth plan. The matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On October 21, Mr. Bentley moved second reading of Bill 172. All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bisson, Gilles
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique

Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Levac, Dave
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Millooy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield

Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Klees, Frank
Munro, Julia
Savoline, Joyce

Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 13.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and to ask the Legislature to welcome Bette Jean Crews, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and farmers and farm groups who are here today to support the resolution to review the OSPCA, which we will be debating later this afternoon.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to recognize the following visitors to the Legislature—in the west lobby and in the public galleries—for this afternoon's debate and vote on the OSPCA resolution: Lynn Perrier from Thornhill, the founder of the Reform Advocates for Animal Welfare, a very dedicated animal rights activist; Sunny Reuter and her daughter Samantha and Danny Mihalcea from Toronto; Gord Macey from Toronto; Douglas Brown from Newmarket; Carla Davidson, who has flown in from Timmins to be with us today; Carl Noble, a former director of the OSPCA; Diane Nielson, Alana Peroff, Sue Nieves, Nasim Mansour, Sandra Lovell, Natalie Serviero, Shannon Broadfield, Katherine Chapman, Beth Linquist, Paulette Young and Leanne Tucker. Please join me in welcoming them all to the House today.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I, too, would like to recognize the following visitors in the House today who have come for this afternoon's debate on the OSPCA resolution: Andrea Goulding, Steve Straub, Lesley Campbell, Linda Reid, David Honey, Pamela Pitney, Helen Pilicoski, Lisa Gorecki, Daniel Belanger, Laura Hobbs and Michael Franklin. Please join me in welcoming them today.

Mr. Steve Clark: I would also like to recognize the following visitors in the House today who have come for

this afternoon's debate on the OSPCA resolution: William Massey, who is from Brockville; Trudy Booth; Jack Alexandere Amaral; Maureen Johnston; Fran Coughlin; Elizabeth Marshall; Jim Wilson; Janice Henry; Ron Jordan; Ted and Joan Sheppard; Glenn Carter; Elisabeth Jimmink; and Claudia Vecchio. Please join me in welcoming them today.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I would like to recognize the following visitors in the House today who have come for this afternoon's debate on the OSPCA resolution: Shannon Broadfield; Jim Moyer; Corinne Thaw; Leanne Tucker; Stanley Burns; Angie Laurusaitis; Wendy Reist; Lynn Pitney; Carol Tovell; and Ariel Lang. Please join me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would like to welcome Fred Hahn and members of the executive of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, who are here for the statement this afternoon.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I would like the House to recognize and welcome a number of visitors who are here today for the debate on the OSPCA resolution: Henry Vandenbrock; Dean Stewart; Liz Marshall; Deb Madill; Sunny Reuter; Jack Maclaren; Karen Bainbridge; the Probst family; Wayne and Jenny Ireland; and Joan and Ted Sheppard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity to welcome some guests in the Speaker's gallery today: Louroz Mercader; Scott Priz, who is visiting from Melbourne, Australia; and Michael Binetti. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to welcome Sarah Ker-Hornell from FilmOntario, who has joined us this afternoon as well. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Ted Arnott: I rise to read a statement on the importance of understanding the provincial deficit. On Tuesday, the finance minister announced the deficit for 2010-11 would be \$18.7 billion. As a result, by 2012, Premier McGuinty will double the debt, taking it to \$289.3 billion during his term of office.

The debt and deficit are an admission of abject failure of the province's wage restraint, HST, energy experiments and so-called Open Ontario schemes. It's also an admission that this government has been unable to control its spending, and since the government isn't serious about controlling spending, it has only one choice, and that is to increase revenues.

Despite hitting Ontario families with billions in new taxes and fees, the McGuinty Liberals barely made a dent in the largest provincial deficit in Canada. Families continue to pay more and receive less.

The \$18.7-billion deficit clearly shows what members of this side of the House have been saying all along, and

that is: The McGuinty Liberals don't have a revenue problem; they have a spending problem.

DIABETES

Mr. Dave Levac: On November 14, concerned parents, children and medical professionals participated in the 20th annual World Diabetes Day. This day is the focal point of a global effort to increase diabetes education and awareness. Diabetes is a disease that is rising very quickly, and unfortunately, particularly amongst children.

On Monday, we here at Queen's Park had the honour of being visited by parents of children with type 1 diabetes. They brought with them their children and shared their stories of the difficulties a child faces managing their disease while in school. I hope that those of you who had a chance to speak with them gained a new awareness and support their concerns.

Diabetes in Ontario Schools is one of the many organizations around the province that offer support to families that have a child with the disease. The Brantford chapter of the Canadian Diabetes Association is another, and it will have its annual Christmas party for their children with diabetes on November 28. Rumour has it that Santa himself will be making an appearance.

I hope that through the efforts of Diabetes in Ontario Schools, the Canadian Diabetes Association and other such advocates of World Diabetes Day, everyone can be convinced that urgent action is needed to help these children with diabetes minimize the impact of their disease on their daily lives.

There are 7,000 children affected, who have type 1 diabetes. I respectfully ask that members of the Legislature support my private member's bill, Bill 5, to establish a bill of rights for children with diabetes.

1310

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise to read a statement today in recognition of the fall economic update, which we will be hearing later, and on a rather auspicious accomplishment of the province of Ontario. October represented the 46th month in a row that Ontario's unemployment rate was higher than the national average. Our province's unemployment rate is 8.6%, compared to the national unemployment rate of 7.9%.

We lost 2,800 net jobs in October alone. In October, the total number of manufacturing jobs lost under this government's watch reached 294,900. If the mass exodus continues, the 300,000th manufacturing job lost under Premier McGuinty's watch will be in the form of a pink slip to another unlucky Ontario worker in the next two or three months. That represents a decline of 27.5% of good-paying, family-supporting manufacturing jobs.

In fact, there are 628,100 people in Ontario who were out of work in October. That means there are more people out of work in Ontario than the entire populations

of Windsor and London put together. It's a shameful thing to happen to Ontario.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There is a growing anxiety in my riding and, my guess is, in other ridings in the daycare community.

Parents welcomed the introduction of full-day early learning, and as people in this chamber are well aware, there are many people, many families, who badly need full-day early learning; they need a complete daycare package.

Increasingly, they are coming to me concerned about the implementation of the program. Parents have stopped me on the street to say that because their summer months are not covered by full-day early learning, some people, to preserve a space, are actually spending year-round for child care spaces so that when summer comes, they will have coverage.

There is concern on the part of those who run non-profit daycares that with the loss of four- and five-year-olds, the economics of their daycares do not work, and they don't see the funding coming forward.

The Minister of Education and the Minister of Children and Youth Services need to meet, act now and come forward with the funding and support necessary to ensure that those daycare centres are protected; that parents and children know that their summers and pre- and post-school hours will be dealt with; and reassure families and daycare workers that those daycare centres will be protected.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Today, Ontarians who are concerned about the authority of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the OSPCA, will be joining us in the gallery to demonstrate their support for ballot item 51, which asks the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act of 2008.

Many of these individuals live in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and I believe it is important for their concerns to be heard. They would like to see legislative changes to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in Ontario, as well as to having inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA separated from its charitable animal shelter.

In 2008, many public hearings on Bill 50 took place, and certainly there was a divergence of views at that time. However, since proclamation of the act, an event in my riding has galvanized concerned individuals to ask for a review of its provisions. An outbreak of ringworm at the OSPCA shelter in my riding resulted in a plan to

euthanize all the animals there. Although this plan was halted after 99 animals were killed and an independent review has been ordered, I believe further debate in this House is required and I will be listening intently this afternoon to the discussion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's wonderful to see such attendance here for members' statements today, but I would just ask, if you are having any sort of conversation, out of respect for the members delivering their statements, that you take those conversations to the side lobby—and for our guests' sakes as well.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would certainly appreciate silence while I deliver this.

Laughter.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I rise to deliver this statement today in recognition of the fall economic update we will be hearing later and the need for real relief for Ontario families. Premier McGuinty's energy experiments, from smart meters and time-of-use rates to the so-called Green Energy Act and the Samsung subsidy, have electricity bills skyrocketing. Add in the HST, hidden energy taxes and other rate hikes, and the annual cost of electricity bills for Ontario families is set to rise by a staggering \$732 a year by 2015.

Electricity rates for Ontario families are already up 75% under this Premier's watch. This isn't a plan. Ontario PCs will have a well-thought-out plan based on principle, and not make things up on the fly like McGuinty. The government has no plan. This move just means they've hiked the HST to pay for their failed energy experiments. Our plan will put consumers first and respect their ability to make choices—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Economic Development—and thank you to the armchair Speaker from Leeds.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from York.

Please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. As one of the truly nice members of this House, I never thought this would happen to me.

Our plan will put consumers first and respect their ability to make choices and, more importantly, respect their ability to pay the bills.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I rise today to remind the members of the House that we have a great, great wine region in southwestern Ontario. I want to invite you to join my friend from Beaches–East York, because he

knows well how it is, to come down and visit us and taste some of that great wine.

Just recently, as a matter of fact, Pelee Island Winery opened up a facility in China, where there is demand for their wine. They are known nationwide and internationally. Colio wines are known nationwide and internationally, and we have other fine estate wineries. I would encourage you to come down at any time during this winter break. We've had a great wine season, so I would like to see you come down and visit us and enjoy some of that wine.

And I tell you what I'm going to do today. I'm going to get out of here as soon as I can, and I'm going to go home and enjoy some of that wine with my bride of 49 years on our anniversary. I just want to take the last few seconds to tell her—wherever that camera is—I love you, Joan.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: The McGuinty government understands that a good education is key for our children's future and that good schools need to be safe schools. Our kids cannot be afraid to get on the bus in the morning, so we have to do everything we can to stop schoolyard bullying. That's why our government has made school safety a priority.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested more than \$230 million in our safe schools strategy. The McGuinty government also understands that we can't fix this problem alone, so we have worked together with parents, students, teachers and communities to establish safe schools teams across the province. And to recognize this, our government yesterday announced that we will recognize 10 of these teams across Ontario that have done exceptional and innovative work with the annual Premier's Safe Schools Awards.

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I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to helping Ontario parents, teachers and educators protect students from bullying and to recognizing the great work that so many Ontarians do in our communities and our schools. That is a fantastic step to increase awareness and combat bullying.

I urge those who know of the outstanding work that deserves recognition to submit a nomination before March 31, 2011, so that together we'll keep Ontario's schools safe.

TAXATION

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: The McGuinty government has delivered bold economic leadership and is delivering real results for real Ontario families with the Ontario tax reform plan.

The facts speak for themselves: Ontario is leading Canada and Canada is leading the world in coming back from the global recession. The Ontario economy has regained 76% of the jobs lost to the global recession, compared to only 10% within the US economy. The HST, the harmonization of the GST and the PST, is an

important part of creating a competitive economic environment and creating jobs. This is real progress, and the job growth will continue.

While the McGuinty government has been delivering results, the party opposite has been playing games with Ontario families. The Leader of the Opposition is on record supporting the HST: "To be clear, I believe that there's little sense in allowing two separate governments to apply two separate sets of taxes and policies and collect two separate groups of sales taxes."

When the time came for strong leadership, the opposition and their leader failed to measure up. They now continue to hide behind rhetoric. I want to quote the *Toronto Star*: "He attacked the 13% harmonized sales and tax that takes effect July 1, but pointedly refused to promise to repeal it."

The McGuinty government has been up front with our plan to create jobs and reform our tax system to generate investment and, most importantly, to create jobs.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / *Projet de loi 135, Loi*

concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I rise today to present the 2010 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review.

From 2003 to 2008, Ontario enjoyed job creation and economic growth.

As a result of that growth and this government's investments, our children are enjoying the benefits of a stronger education system and smaller class sizes, while our parents are enjoying the benefits of the renewed attention paid to their health care.

Ontario's economy was firing on all cylinders and we felt secure in our ability to take on the world.

In 2008, the world changed—it changed dramatically—and a global recession set in.

The world's financial system came to the brink of collapse.

Global brands—among them the titans of industry—faltered. Factories the world over closed and jobs across the globe were lost.

We took action with our Open Ontario plan: a plan to strengthen the economy, to grow a new clean energy industry, to protect the gains we've made in schools and hospitals and to provide tax relief to families and businesses.

So today, with the changes this government has made, nine out of 10 taxpayers are paying less income tax than they did just a year ago.

With the changes we've made, over 180,000 new jobs have been created since the bottom of the recession in May 2009.

This government was elected to bring change to the province of Ontario, change from the previous government's neglect of schools, of health care, of the electricity system and of the public services that our families rely on.

We've taken action, and now, today, we plan to do more.

Ontario's economy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just say to the respected members of the opposition that their leaders

will have the opportunity to respond to the minister, and I think we'd all like to hear the minister.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, Ontario's economy is emerging from the global recession.

Key economic indicators have improved since the recession, though many remain below pre-recession levels.

After declining for four consecutive quarters, our real gross domestic product has increased for the last four quarters in a row.

That's good news for Ontario families.

Based on the best available advice, we project that Ontario's GDP growth will be 3.2% in 2010, up from what we forecast in our most recent budget.

The economy is growing.

Real GDP has recovered 71% of its recessionary loss, and that is helping job creation.

While the United States has recovered just 10% of the jobs it lost due to the recession, Ontario has recovered 75% of the jobs lost in the last downturn.

It is a good sign, though our work is never done when it comes to strengthening the economy and creating jobs.

Economic growth will moderate in the coming years due, in large measure, to slow growth in the US economy.

For 2011, we expect real GDP to grow by 2.2%, and in 2012, by 2.5%. Our planning assumptions are lower than the average private sector forecast.

Though Ontario is emerging from the recession, families want to know that they can feel secure about their economic future.

Across the country, around the world and in the communities in which we live, people are still feeling the impact of the recession. Our government plans to help more.

For decades, governments of every political stripe have failed to make crucial investments in electricity supply and transmission.

By 2003, under the previous government, people did not know if the lights would stay on.

Back then, under the previous government, 25% of Ontario's electricity supply came from dirty coal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. If there are members in here who are not wanting to listen, I would suggest that they leave the chamber and not disrupt.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The previous government had no plan for conservation and no plan for supply to keep up with demand.

The previous government let the wires that bring power to homes fall into critical disrepair.

At that time, while demand was going up in Ontario, the electricity system lost 1,800 megawatts of power capacity. That's the equivalent of Niagara Falls running dry.

Moreover, in 2003, under the previous government, Ontario had to import U.S. coal-fired electricity just to keep the lights on.

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The previous government even had to set up emergency generators because of the fear of brownouts.

To top it all off, the previous government's market-driven deregulation scheme saw electricity prices spike an average of 30% over seven months in 2002. That hurt Ontario families, and that set us back in a way that we're just now beginning to come to terms with.

Clean, reliable electricity should be a big part of our everyday lives. There's no compromise on clean air and reliable power.

In 2003, Ontario needed action and this government took action.

With the changes we've made, there's enough new, cleaner generation to power some two million homes, about a fifth of that coming from renewables like clean energy wind and clean energy solar.

With the changes we've made, there are 5,000 kilometres of improved transmission lines.

With the changes we've made, conservation programs are in place and are saving families money.

We are closing Ontario's dirty coal plants, the equivalent of taking seven million cars off the road.

All of this is making Ontario a leader in clean energy. It also means new investments in Ontario jobs, including the Sarnia Solar Project, the largest operating in the world, where there were 800 construction jobs.

In addition, in partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation, the Lower Mattagami project, the largest northern hydro project in 40 years, will employ 600 people, many of them aboriginals, in its construction phase.

And the list goes on.

Clean energy manufacturing plants are opening in communities like Guelph and Windsor to serve the Ontario market and to export made-in-Ontario solar panels and wind turbines.

The previous government gave us dirty coal. This government is eliminating coal entirely and cleaning our air.

The previous government left us with 10 wind turbines. This government has built 700.

These investments cost money.

We had to invest. They were necessary and unavoidable costs.

We are all paying for decades of neglect by governments of all political stripes.

Residential and business consumers around the world are feeling the impact of electricity prices.

And if people tell you they can deliver clean, reliable electricity at a lower price, don't believe them.

People want clean air and they want reliable electricity and they are also looking for help paying some of the additional costs until prices stabilize.

That's why today we are introducing the Ontario clean energy benefit.

The Ontario clean energy benefit would give Ontario families, farms and small businesses a 10% rebate on their bills each and every month for five years.

This will help families, it will help hard-working small business owners, and it will make a very big difference for Ontario farms.

The McGuinty government is helping those who are feeling the pinch from the rising cost of living and, especially—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East, I'm warning you.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, they're taking credit for something they didn't do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's a warning. You'll be named.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We should have a penalty box.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, and don't be encouraging him.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The McGuinty government is helping those who are feeling the pinch from the rising cost of living and, especially, hydro prices.

Everything we have done over the last few years is helping.

C'est pourquoi nous proposons aujourd'hui la prestation ontarienne pour l'énergie propre.

Cette prestation offrirait aux familles, aux fermes et aux petites entreprises de la province une prestation équivalant à 10 % de leurs factures d'électricité pendant cinq ans.

Ce serait donc une remise de 10 % de votre facture d'électricité tous les mois à compter du 1^{er} janvier 2011.

Tout ce que nous faisons aide.

Since May 2009, the Ontario economy has created over 180,000 jobs.

Many who lost their jobs during the recession have been rehired.

Being without a job for any period of time is very difficult for individuals and their families.

That's why this government trains more than one million people annually through skills development and assistance at Employment Ontario.

Our Second Career program has helped over 36,000 laid-off workers get training. Over 60% of Second Career participants get new jobs within three months of graduation.

Just as we needed to retrain workers and just as we had to rebuild our electricity system, we needed to modernize a tax system that penalized businesses for investing in job creation.

Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth is cutting taxes for people, cutting taxes for businesses and bringing our tax system into the 21st century.

With the changes we've made, the people of Ontario will see almost 600,000 new jobs over the next 10 years.

The Open Ontario plan moved forward with a group of tax breaks specifically designed to help families—breaks on energy costs, on property taxes and on their children's activities.

With the changes we've made, nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers pay less income tax today than they did a year ago.

Everywhere I go, people talk to me about their retirement savings.

All of us should take comfort in knowing that we're taking meaningful steps to better protect retirement income.

The McGuinty government has introduced two bills on pension reform—the most significant reform to pension law in a generation.

Let me re-emphasize: The McGuinty government will also continue the fight for affordable enhancements to the Canada pension plan for Ontarians and indeed for all Canadians.

We made the decision at the beginning of the global recession to protect jobs and sustain schools and hospitals as well as other vital public services.

Our government is reducing the size of the deficit each and every year.

As economies return to growth, governments must return to balance, and our government is doing that.

We have a responsible plan to eliminate the deficit.

I'm pleased to announce that the projected deficit for 2010-11 has been slashed by almost 25% compared to the forecast just a year ago.

At this time, we are projecting the deficit for 2010-11 to be reduced to \$18.7 billion.

The reason for this decline is twofold: stronger economic growth and responsible management.

We will continue to be prudent and efficient managers and invest tax dollars wisely.

We've taken action on our biggest spending line: compensation.

About half of the negotiated settlements since the 2010 budget have resulted in two years of no compensation increases.

To those unions and employers who have responded to our request for help, we say thank you. Working together, we'll build a better Ontario.

I will be providing periodic updates on the choices we are making to manage responsibly and to focus on the priorities of Ontario families.

We take this responsibility very seriously.

The previous government held a fire sale for Ontario assets, like the Highway 407 deal. We've changed that, and we're taking a thoughtful and responsible approach. We are in the process of renewing our long-standing partnership in electronic land registration.

We are proposing to extend Teranet's licences to provide electronic land registration and writs services while retaining control over fees. The proposed agreement would provide a \$1-billion payment, to be used to reduce our province's debt. This would save up to \$50 million in annual interest costs. It would also provide annual royalty payments of an additional \$50 million starting in 2017.

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When added to the \$1-billion reduction in the deficit, this means we are borrowing \$2 billion less this year than was forecasted.

Last year, the people of Ontario invested in the auto sector to help protect 400,000 jobs right here. General Motors repaid their loans ahead of schedule. We are also pleased to see the turnaround at Chrysler. The government is exiting from these companies in a responsible way within a reasonable time frame.

General Motors issued its stock to the public on the Toronto Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange today. As part of the initial public offering, Ontario and the federal government have offered to sell 20% of their interest in the company.

Overall, this is a good sign that the auto sector is recovering and that the Ontario economy is back on track.

Our task is to encourage a competitive economy that creates jobs, to manage down the deficit and debt, and to help Ontarians fulfill their hopes and aspirations.

We cannot—we will not—turn back the clock to an outdated tax system that discourages investment and costs us jobs.

We will move forward with our plan to make Ontario a better place to invest so that jobs are created for our families.

We cannot and we will not turn back the clock to coal-burning pollution.

With the changes we've made, we'll be leaders in clean air and clean energy.

We will not turn back to crumbling schools and closing hospitals.

Instead, we will be moving forward with full-day kindergarten and educating our students so that they have the skills they need to get the very best jobs.

We will continue to move this great province forward.

We've heard what people have said about rising electricity costs.

We will deliver clean air, clean energy and a 10% clean energy benefit on your bill each and every month for the next five years.

We will continue to make investments that help grow the economy and create jobs. We will keep moving Ontario forward.

The people of this great province deserve nothing less.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just as we are about to engage in the responses, the honourable members for the most part did tone things down, and I'm asking that the government side be respectful of the responses.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: After seven years of more of the same tired old rhetoric, missed targets, job-killing tax, hydro increases, and runaway wasteful spending, it is time for change here in the province of Ontario.

I want to make three key points today. First, Ontario families are working longer and harder than ever. They're spending less time with their children, less time at home, and, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's government, less money in the family—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable member on the use of names.

Mr. Tim Hudak: For all they pay in new taxes and fees, they're getting less in return from this government. In fact, we find out today costs are going up even more with double-digit hydro increases. What is the Premier's response? More costly energy experiments, more tax increases like the HST, a bloated bureaucracy, and more McGuinty government waste.

Families know that hydro rates have increased by 75%—100%, in fact, if you have a smart meter. They slapped down the HST on hydro bills across our province. Now the Premier, just a few months out from an election, wants to give back a few mere drops in the bucket.

While hard-working families deserve relief in any form they can get, they see this gesture for what it really is: a transparent shell game played with their own money by a government that is out of touch, out of gas and, increasingly, out of time.

Worse yet, families can expect to see even more, with double-digit increases in their hydro bills in 2011 and beyond. According to this government's own fiscal update, this so-called benefit will be erased in very short order as families' hydro bills skyrocket 46% more in the next five years—minimum.

Whether it comes out of the pockets of taxpayers or ratepayers, families know that under Premier McGuinty they're paying more. They're saying, "Enough is enough, and it is time for change in Ontario."

My second point is that this government has mismanaged Ontario's finances so badly that they are somehow responsible for both the largest tax increases and the largest debt increases in Ontario's history. They've taken in since last year more than \$12 billion in revenue. Families are paying more in taxes and fees, but this government didn't put a dent in their massive budget deficit, despite \$12 billion more in revenue.

What does that mean? They continue to spend well over \$2 million more than they're taking in—every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week—and shrugging their shoulders and leaving it up to the next generation to figure out how to pay for this runaway spending. That kind of fiscal mismanagement is why Premier McGuinty earned the distinction of being crowned Canada's worst financial manager by the Fraser Institute.

This brings me to my final point: Families know that the same tired government that got us into this mess certainly cannot be expected to get us out. For all the Premier's promises that his HST tax grab would somehow create jobs, we've seen over 41,000 private sector jobs lost in the four months since they slapped down the HST.

The Premier's expensive energy experiments, like his sweetheart backroom deal with Samsung, are chasing jobs out of the province and sending them to Korea. In reality, they're taking more money out of the wallets of families, who will soon be paying \$732 more per year on their hydro bills.

Ontario families want change. They didn't get it from the government today. We saw more of the same tired,

out-of-gas policies. Clearly, after seven years in office, the only way to bring the change that Ontario families need and deserve is to change this Premier and his government and bring in a PC majority government so Ontario can lead again.

We will advance our priorities. We'll bring real relief to Ontario families. We'll hold government in restraint so that we focus on the priorities of families and focus on job creation, so that Ontario can once again be the economic powerhouse of our great country.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ministers.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Yak, where's the plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Energy, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Minister of Education.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to warn the Minister of Economic Development.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No.

Responses? Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the thing that's most clear about this fall economic statement is that this Premier and this government are scrambling. After permanently raising the cost of electricity with private power deals, not-so-smart meters and all kinds of other schemes, on top of which is the salt in the wound, the HST—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: So you're for dumb meters.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Finance will withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

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Ms. Andrea Horwath: —on top of which is the salt in the wound, the HST on the hydro bills, Premier Dalton McGuinty offers in this economic statement a temporary solution for struggling families.

Now, we absolutely support any move that makes life better for families. In fact, we have been pleading, we have been urging this government to finally take some action to give families a bit of a break. But this is not about that; this is not about helping families with their bills. What it is about, though, is solving the Premier's problems until the next election rolls around in about a year.

People are hurting. Every single day since September, New Democrats have been coming in this Legislature, bringing the stories of those families to the feet of this Premier—every single day. They have been telling us through all kinds of different methods that they just can't take it anymore, that their hydro bills are off the Richter scale and they cannot make ends meet. Families like Helen Crabbe's, who I mentioned in the House today,

She wrote us an email that basically said, "Please help us!" Help us by taking the HST off of hydro.

People aren't being greedy; people aren't being greedy on this factor. They are scared, and they're scared for a good reason. In fact, only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member about the use of names.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In fact, only in Premier Dalton McGuinty's Ontario are people literally afraid of opening their next hydro bill.

After promising a big boom with the HST, nothing happened. The HST was going to solve all the province's problems. Nothing happened. In fact, no more jobs have been created in this province. The economy is still struggling significantly, as the finance minister's own documents indicate.

We launched our campaign in September and we had thousands upon thousands of people engaging with us immediately in trying to get this government to do the right thing. Sixty thousand petitions were signed in a matter of about six weeks. We held meetings with people around this province. We listened to what they had to say. We tweeted with them. We received their petitions and their emails. While people across the province are experiencing permanent hikes to their hydro bills, permanent HST on top of those hikes in their hydro bills and their prices keep climbing and climbing, what do we have? We have a plan that the government admits quite clearly they're just going to phase out. We don't really know if they're going to keep their promise about a five-year phase-out plan, but they're definitely going to phase out the plan.

What's not getting phased out, though, is the HST. The HST is going to be there forever, rubbing salt in the wounds of those hydro bills, which this government projects are going to go up considerably—46% in just the next couple of years, and then continue to climb after that. Then what do we end up with? HST on top of those bills as well. The price hikes are still going to be there.

We've seen the McGuinty Liberals promise relief before to the people of this province. In 2003, in fact, he joined Ernie Eves in a promise for a five-year rate freeze on the hydro rates. What happened to that promise? Months after that promise was made, it was scrapped by this government. So I think the people of Ontario know this government very well and they are not prepared to accept that this next promise is one that will actually be kept by the Premier of Ontario.

I don't want to omit commenting on the Teranet deal that this government has announced in their fall economic statement, a 50-year private sector deal. I think we should have learned in this province that we've seen this movie one too many times. Over and over again it plays. The fire sale of the 407 helped the government of the day perhaps, but it's still burning Ontarians day in and day out. An immediate cash grab for a long-term lack of benefit for the people of this province is no deal for anybody.

PETITIONS

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families are struggling to help put their kids through university;

"Whereas students in Ontario graduate with an average \$26,000 in debt and have the highest tuition and largest class sizes in the country; and

"Whereas Ontario tax dollars should be kept in Ontario to help Ontario students, not sent overseas;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the McGuinty government to cancel its plan to give foreign students scholarships of \$40,000 a year and reinvest these funds in scholarships for Ontario students."

I want to thank the Duncan family of London for sending this petition to me. I agree with it and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario. This adds literally hundreds more petitions to the many thousands we've received in this Legislature relating to oversight of the OSPCA. The petition read as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park ... on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support. We will be debating this resolution later on this afternoon, and we look forward to the government and all members supporting that resolution.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty government is pushing ahead with the installation of so-called smart meters and mandatory time-of-use billing by June 2011 despite the flaws with the program; and

"Whereas 21 energy distributors, including provincially owned Hydro One, said that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2011 doesn't give them time to fix all the problems with the meters, fix bugs with the software to run them, and to fix the inaccurately high bills they produce as a result; and

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board, in a letter of August 4, admitted that energy distributors 'may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during the implementation' of time of use, and said that 'these matters need to be addressed'; and

"Whereas relying on computer technology that the energy industry says is not ready and isn't reliable is making families pay too much on their hydro bills;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the McGuinty government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program."

I affix my name in full support.

1400

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I give this to Donna for submission.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): One moment, please.

It's wonderful to have all our guests here, but as much as you may want to participate in the proceedings down here, you're not allowed to; you have to get yourself elected. So if you do want to participate, you have to sit on your hands and bite your tongue. But thank you; we do welcome you to the Legislature.

Please continue.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Thank you, Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks' table.

POWER PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro: "Whereas the Ontario government has cancelled the Oakville peaker plant, citing a decrease in need for power in that community, proposing to meet needs by better transmission, and despite the fact that the government may face a \$1-billion lawsuit due to the cancellation;

"Whereas the King township peaker plant is going forward, with the Ontario government having shut off debate about the plan at the OMB through regulation, after failing to provide a proper environmental assessment or community consultation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To give the King township peaker plant and the local community the same consideration as residents of Oakville, and to decide on the future of the peaker plant on a non-partisan basis."

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have more petitions regarding the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

As I agree with the petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and pass it to the table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is for provincial oversight of the OSPCA as well:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to give it to Miguel to deliver it to the table.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Dave Levac: This is a petition that is supported by an organization in the riding of Brant, through the First Nations as well and the United Empire Loyalists:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas members of the Ontario Genealogical Society are concerned about protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries in their original locations; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812," which we are celebrating soon;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground" and any others in Ontario "for real estate development" of this province.

I affix my name to this petition as I support it 110%.

1410

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Sarah.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TEMISKAMING AND CHATHAM-KENT- LEAMINGTON ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 CONCERNANT TEMISKAMING ET CHATHAM-KENT-LEAMINGTON

Mr. Hoy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to change the name of the Territorial District of Timiskaming and the electoral district of Chatham-Kent-Essex / Projet de loi 132, Loi remplaçant le nom du district territorial de Timiskaming et de la circonscription électorale de Chatham-Kent-Essex.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and speak to my own bill, which encompasses a change of the riding name of Chatham-Kent-Essex to Chatham-Kent-Leamington. My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane will be talking more fully about the part of the bill that affects his riding equally so.

I want to begin with this: As members here know, the riding I represent has been called Chatham-Kent-Essex for many years. I'm proposing that it be changed to

Chatham-Kent-Leamington, and here are some examples of why I think that's apropos.

In Leamington, we have the Roma Club of Leamington, the Leamington Lebanese Club, the Leamington Kinsmen, the Leamington Rotary Club, the Leamington Municipal Marina, the Leamington Kinsmen Recreational Complex, the Leamington District Memorial Hospital, the Leamington family health team—I think you see the direction I'm going here—the Leamington and District Half Century Centre, the Leamington Mennonite home and apartments, the Leamington District Secondary School, the Leamington Post and Shopper, the Leamington public library, the Leamington District Agricultural Society, the Leamington and District Chamber of Commerce, the Leamington Fire Service, the Leamington Police Service, Leamington Airport and Leamington Transit.

Nowhere in that list of entities, service clubs and providers is the word "Essex" used. That's because all of them are within the municipality of Leamington.

Essex consists of Lasalle, Tecumseh, Lakeshore, Amherstburg, Essex, Kingsville and Leamington. I represent, and anyone who follows me in the future would be representing, a riding that is called Essex but is really Leamington.

There has always been confusion around the name Chatham-Kent-Essex, because there is a county of Essex, a town of Essex, a federal riding named Essex and the provincial riding represented by my colleague Bruce Crozier, who represents Essex. Having Essex in the name implies that I represent all of Essex, which is not the case. I represent the wonderful municipality of Leamington.

Many people unfamiliar with the riding boundaries do not know that fact, that I represent only that part of Essex.

Leamington has a rich history. There's lots to be said about Leamington, and I want to touch on a few of those points.

Leamington is at the most southerly latitude within Canada. It shares the 42nd parallel with places like Rome and California. It enjoys early springs, warm summers and the longest growing season in eastern Canada. Leamington enjoys the greatest number of sunshine hours of any municipality in Canada: over 2,000 hours, according to Agriculture Canada. Leamington is known as the sun parlour of Canada. This combination of favourable climate and rich soils permits Leamington's growers to produce a wider range of crops than anywhere in Canada. This is aided by being the second-warmest climate in Canada, after the lower mainland of British Columbia.

It is situated just 45 minutes from the Windsor-Detroit international border. There is a ferry service to and from Pelee Island and Sandusky, Ohio, which runs from April through November for tourist travel as well as the movement of agricultural goods and commodities. As I mentioned before, Leamington has a private commercial airport and public transit.

The municipality of Leamington and the former Mersea township cover 262 square kilometres. There is

an Uptown Leamington Business Improvement Area that represents over 200 businesses in that geographic area.

Many members, I hope, would know that Leamington is known as the tomato capital of Canada. Tomatoes are Leamington's largest greenhouse vegetable crop, supplying supermarkets across all of North America.

It is the home of the Heinz food processing plant, the largest employer in Leamington. They process the field tomatoes. The Leamington plant is the second-largest Heinz facility in the world, and when you pick up the bottle, it says "Leamington," not "Essex." In 1909, H.J. Heinz decided to expand to Canada and set up manufacturing operations in Leamington. Not only do they work with tomatoes and manufacturing, but they started processing pickles, vinegars and beans. In 1910, it produced its first bottle of ketchup, and two years later, started to make cooked spaghetti. Soups joined the product line in 1917, and juices and baby foods soon followed in 1930. The plant employs approximately 800, and 330 people are hired at the hectic time of harvest, who are additional to that number.

There is also huge greenhouse production in Leamington, and it is a billion-dollar business. With the fertile soils and temperatures and longer daylight hours, Leamington has great support for their crops there.

I want to quote the mayor-elect of Leamington. The previous mayor John Adams also endorsed this change. Mayor-elect John Paterson wrote to me and said:

"I am pleased to offer my support to your private member's bill ... which is about to receive its second reading, requesting the current riding name of 'Chatham-Kent-Essex' be changed to 'Chatham-Kent-Leamington.'

"Understandably the current name creates a great deal of confusion, implying that your riding encompasses all of Essex county, rather than just the municipality of Leamington and Chatham-Kent. The town of Essex, Essex county and the federal and provincial riding of Essex become blurred in most minds, making it difficult to identify what area is actually being represented and by whom.

"We are pleased that you are continuing to pursue this logical name change and feel that changing the riding name to Chatham-Kent-Leamington would help make the riding boundaries much more identifiable and end the current confusion."

I can say to members of the House that the federal member, Dave Van Kesteren, also endorses this. He sent me an email just yesterday. He has supported this initiative in the past.

1420

I think I've shown and highlighted why this change should be made. It's a logical change. It doesn't affect any other part of Essex in any way. The mayor past and the current mayor-elect support it, and I think the people of Leamington, who've worked so hard at their jobs and in their workplaces to create a municipality that is as wonderful as it is, deserve to have recognition in the provincial naming of Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Ramsay: First off, I'd like to thank the members of the opposition for allowing me to speak out of rotation to accommodate my schedule. I very much appreciate that. I'd like to thank my colleague Pat Hoy for accommodating my legislation, which is basically housekeeping to correct a spelling error, a historic error, in the name of Timiskaming, and allowing me to piggyback my bill onto his, so that we could clean up this particular historical error.

I'd like to thank Minister Bradley's office, Minister Bartolucci's office, Carol Price from the whip's office and legal counsel Danna Brown for all their help in this, too.

About a year and a half ago, a local historian by the name of Bud Colquhoun, who I know is watching today and has been very persistent on this, brought to my attention a historic error in the spelling of Timiskaming. Quite frankly, I hadn't really paid too much attention to why, at home, there were two spellings of Timiskaming. In anything to do with the province, Timiskaming was spelled T-i-m, but the lake that the whole area is named after is T-e-m. He had done some research, and when he brought that to my attention, I went to our legislative library here and they confirmed that back in 1927, when the acts of the day were consolidated, there was a spelling error made from the previous one that was about 1914, where it had been spelled T-e-m. For some reason, somebody had put an "i" in there instead of an "e," and that was it. When the electoral act was revised in the early 1950s, that got changed to "i" also because, up to then, the electoral district was still spelled with an "e."

I very much appreciate Mr. Colquhoun bringing this forward to me. But I did think that before I went ahead to make this change—because people were used to this; whether it was an error or not, many people had only known the government spelling as "T-i"—I thought I'd better consult. So I did a householder referendum to every household in the geographic district of Timiskaming, about one third of my riding, that it would affect. There was an overwhelming positive response that, yes, the spelling should be corrected.

Just about four years before that, we had an amalgamation of three communities that touched Lake Temiskaming. Diamond township, the town of New Liskeard and the town of Haileybury had a contest to ask the people there what the name of the new community should be. The name they chose was Temiskaming Shores, spelled with an "e."

So, it's really obvious that this needs to be done. I'm glad to get it done. While it's not the most important thing that's on my plate, it's something that should be corrected.

I very much appreciate the patience of the House to allow me to bring this forward, and I would hope to have the House's support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill. As someone who grew up in the town of Leamington and got my first political experience as a candidate in the riding of Essex South, which at that time included Leamington and Kingsville as well as Amherstburg and Wheatley, I believe that the clarification that is being sought in this bill is the right thing to do. It's about time that Leamington had a special place in the Hansard and the record of this Legislature.

It was 1975 when I first ran as a candidate in Essex South. I came close, at the age of 24, but not close enough. I was destined for another 20 years of private sector experience before I was first elected in 1995—not in the riding of Essex South and nowhere near Essex county, either. It was then in the riding of York–Mackenzie. I was the first and the last member to be elected in the riding of York–Mackenzie because it had undergone a name change as well.

Then in 1999, I was elected in the riding of Oak Ridges, and I was the first and the last member to be elected in the riding of Oak Ridges, because of redistribution. I served there for two terms. Now, I am the first member to be elected in Newmarket–Aurora. I'm not sure about whether I will be the last or whether I will be re-elected. That, of course, is up to my constituents.

Leamington is a wonderful place. It is, in fact, the tomato capital, I believe, of the world. It has not only one of the best climates in the entire country of Canada, but some of the most wonderful people as well. As this change takes place, I know that not only will it serve the purpose that the honourable member spoke to, but it is certainly the appropriate thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is an honour always to rise in this place and to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party. Of course, we in the New Democratic Party have no objection to this name change either.

In a sense, it would be nice to mend the standing orders so that this kind of debate could happen on a committee level rather than taking up private members' public business, but it is certainly a reasonable request backed by members of the community.

I just had a wonderful lunch, replete with tomatoes. Hearing about Leamington makes me feel even better about it.

I'm delighted to support it. That will be all the debate that we will be engaging in on this issue. Thanks to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, soon to be Leamington, for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Here we are with a private member's bill that, I think, is one of those that's in the true spirit of what private members' business is for. In fact, I agree with my colleague from Parkdale–High Park that it is unfortunate that this kind of thing can't be dealt with in a different venue, but that's what we're left with today.

I am a lifelong resident of Leamington. You will know, by the fact that I said today was Joan's and my 49th wedding anniversary, that I am also a long-life resident of the town of Leamington.

My colleague from Newmarket–Aurora and I go back to 1975. He was bred of good stock in Leamington and speaks well of his original hometown, and rightly he should.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: My wife—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Pardon me, and the wife of the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, Kay, is from Leamington.

I'm supporting this, of course.

A little bit of history: We've gone through several name changes, much like the member for Newmarket–Aurora has mentioned. There was an old Essex North at one time. There was an Essex South, as has been mentioned. There was an Essex–Kent; when my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex was first elected, he represented the north part of Essex county, and it was called Essex–Kent. There have been a number of name changes, and all of these contained the word “Essex” because they had in them all of Essex county.

Now, as has been explained, there is some confusion because my riding of Essex one would expect to contain all of the county of Essex, which it doesn't. Leamington isn't in it; this is as of 1999, I think, when the boundaries were changed. As a matter of fact, Tecumseh, which is now represented by the Minister of Finance, was partly in the county of Essex. These boundaries have shifted over the years, as have the names; hence, I think, in this instance, some of the confusion. When people think of Essex, Leamington is naturally included in that because it's one of the largest communities in the county of Essex.

In fact, it's unfortunate that Pelee Island is kind of left out of that picture, because Pelee Island, some may be surprised to learn, is not a part of the county of Essex, although it's in my riding. It is a separate municipality. So maybe one day we will be thinking of changing the name of Essex to Essex–Pelee Island; I'm not sure.

1430

But today it's all about Leamington. Leamington is a fine community in the county of Essex, but in this instance, when it comes to identifying the community and identifying it in the riding of the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, I think the recognition should be given that it is part of the riding but that it has the distinction of having the name Leamington attached to it. Then that identifies that it's made up of Chatham–Kent, and Leamington shares a good corner of that.

In fact—and this is a little bit of an aside; I didn't clear this with the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, but he knows full well, having been a former mayor of Leamington, that it was not a happy day when Leamington was taken out of the riding of Essex at the time. I suffered in more ways than one as a result of that, but that we'll leave for another day as well. I just simply want to stand today and support my colleague's private member's bill

and say that, yes, Leamington should be part of the name: Chatham–Kent–Leamington.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my pleasure to rise on this private member's bill by my colleague from Chatham–Kent—and Leamington, I hope—and to say that I think from time to time in this Legislature we deal with issues that need correction and adjustments. That's part of our job here, and this is something appropriately before us at this time: to make this correction, in that there is an obvious omission here of the town of Leamington. It would be only appropriate to support this bill to ensure that this is corrected. Also, the member from Timiskaming mentioned the need to correct a century-old spelling mistake.

I just want to say about Leamington: I think many of these names—and sometimes people think, well, it's frivolous to talk about names, but names mean a great deal to people. Certainly, the people living in these communities really honour and treasure the names they have and they don't want to be diminished in any way.

As you know, Leamington has been mentioned. It's an opportunity to talk about some of our incredible communities in our ridings. I know you have the community of Stayner, which sometimes, people forget about, in your beautiful riding, on the largest beachfront in the world—almost; probably—Wasaga Beach. Maybe we should include Wasaga Beach–Stayner in your constituency, Mr. Speaker, but then other communities may be asking for inclusion.

With Leamington, as people have mentioned, in 2006 Leamington was honoured by MoneySense magazine as the number one place to live in Canada.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Still is.

Mr. Mike Colle: Obviously it is an exceptional place to live. People have mentioned the climate: it is as warm as Rome, Italy; as warm as California. It is symbolic of the great agricultural excellence in Ontario. Their water tower, I think, is a giant tomato. I don't think it's still there?

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: There are tomatoes everywhere, and tomatoes are an incredible export product. It's an incredible industry for Leamington and for Ontario, for Canada; all we have to do is mention Heinz tomato ketchup and the number of people who have enjoyed that for decades. Leamington is also mentioned in that great song by Tom Connors. You know, he doesn't say Essex, he says Leamington.

So we must pay some respect to this community, and it deserves that respect. It's obviously a place that people love to call home and that creates a lot of employment; a great place to retire, to live, to raise a family. So by making this correction, I think we're recognizing that Leamington is an important, viable community that deserves to be included in the name of the riding of Chatham–Kent and hopefully Leamington, in years to come.

I hope everyone here will support the bill by my colleague Pat Hoy from Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Hoy, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Pat Hoy: Thank you to my colleagues and the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who endorses my part of the bill and had an opportunity to explain why he needs a change. That was something that I could decide fairly easily, whether it should be put alongside my bill, because it is a spelling error. I know that people, particularly politicians, want to see their name spelled correctly, so why wouldn't the people of Timiskaming want the correct spelling?

I thank the member from Newmarket-Aurora. I think he knows Leamington well and probably has very fond memories of it. Thank you to the member from Parkdale-High Park; to my colleague Bruce Crozier, the member for Essex; and my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence for their comments and support for this change.

The member from Newmarket-Aurora was talking about firsts in his life as they pertain to ridings and name changes. I know I'm very pleased to be the first member to represent the member from Essex. He is one of my constituents and we have great fun when we go to various meetings and social events, when we talk about who is taking care of Leamington the best on any given day. I know that he really does love his home town.

The point to this bill is that the people of Leamington want this recognition and most assuredly deserve it. They have a place in Canada that is unique. It is the southernmost part of mainland Canada. I had the opportunity to go to Attawapiskat, which is about, I believe, as far north as you can get in that part of Ontario without walking further north. I was amazed to find Leamington tomatoes when I was up there. So it is indeed a small world.

Thank you for your support this afternoon on this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll vote on Mr. Hoy's bill in about 100 minutes.

The chair wants to welcome Julie Kwiecinski to the chamber today, a former staff member here at Queen's Park.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
AMENDMENT ACT
(PROTECTION OF DRUG
ENDANGERED CHILDREN), 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE
ET À LA FAMILLE
(PROTECTION DES ENFANTS
MENACÉS PAR LA DROGUE)

Mr. Dunlop moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to provide protection to drug endangered

children / *Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille pour protéger les enfants menacés par la drogue.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order number 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm honoured today to take a few minutes and present my private member's bill, Bill 84, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to provide protection to drug endangered children. I should say that I want to read the explanatory note and explain to the House why I brought this bill forward.

"The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act to add drug endangered children as a category of children in need of protection. A child is drug endangered in circumstances such as those where a child is exposed to a substance that is used to illegally manufacture an illegal drug or is exposed to that manufacture or production.

"A child protection worker who brings a child to a place of safety under the act or a peace officer who apprehends a child under the act is required to give notice of the apprehension as soon as practicable to the person who last had charge of the child and, if known, to the persons last having lawful custody of the child. The notice must include a statement of the reasons for the apprehension and the telephone number of the office of Legal Aid Ontario that is nearest to the last known residence of the person receiving the notice.

"It is an offence for a person having charge of a child to cause the child to be drug endangered."

I want to say that we have a number of guests in the office who are also here today with Ms. Kwiecinski and in the members' gallery. I want to read who they are and I want to thank them for all the support they've given me on this piece of legislation: Toronto Police Service Superintendent Ron Taverner, chair of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police substance abuse committee; York Regional Police Superintendent Wayne Kalinski, vice-chair of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police substance abuse committee; Orangeville Police Chief Joe Tomei, member of the OACP substance abuse committee—it's good to have you here; Niagara Regional Police Inspector Cliff Sexton, member of the OACP substance abuse committee; and Police Constable Parm Rai, Toronto Police Service. I welcome you all to Queen's Park today, and thank you for being here.

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Why this bill came up is very straightforward. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, who are the leaders of our police community in the province of Ontario, doing all the administrative work, deal day in and day out with different ministries, different support groups across the province and of course all their police services people. Just yesterday, I think you'll recall, we had the Police Association of Ontario here, which represents 31,000 police officers in the province. The fellows who are here today are the people who oversee that.

Every year they have a conference, and at their conference they bring forward resolutions. One of the resolu-

tions they asked for was to have something along the lines of what we have today. In June 2009, OACP passed a resolution calling on the government of Ontario to introduce and pass legislation to protect children exposed to illegal manufacturing of drugs, indoor cannabis grow operations, trafficking and other forms of illegal drug activity.

I introduced this bill back on May 31. I'm very proud of the fact that I introduced it, because our responsibility in this House is to provide law and order, but one of the key things we want to do is protect the children we have here in the province of Ontario: our daughters and sons, our grandchildren etc.

I think it was just yesterday that a young mother from Barrie was sentenced to 25 years in prison because she killed her children. That was one of the saddest interviews I've seen—the court case around that—and these things keep coming up. The police are the front-line people who see these problems and have to deal with them. When you see something as sad as that young lady—I'm not sure it had anything to do with drugs—the reality is that two little babies are not with us anymore because of that.

I felt it was very important for our caucus, because I think most people in the province would agree that Tim Hudak and the PC caucus are very proactive on law and order and the protection of children, and I'm very proud of that. I think we saw that yesterday in the support we received in all the meetings we held with Police Association of Ontario members. They're very happy with our position and how we're handling law and order, and how we're providing that in a platform as we move forward toward the next election. A couple of other speakers today will be bringing comments: Ms. Witmer and also Mr. Clark.

This didn't just come out of nowhere. The province of Alberta has passed similar legislation. We believe that our bill is even stronger than the Alberta bill.

Also, we've got a booklet here today, Drug-Endangered Children, and I know that Mr. Clark will be reading excerpts from it. It's put out by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and it's a whole booklet on the kind of issues they're facing.

When the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police comes forward and they believe there's a problem with boys and girls in family situations and they do not have the extra protection, and they see a role for the government of Ontario and the police services of Ontario, we support that. That's what our job is. We're not the guys out there charging the people, seeing people going to court, but they do know that in the case of drug-endangered children, there's a responsibility we have as individuals.

As the critic for community safety, which I have been for the last seven years, I've worked very closely with the OACP and all the police services. When I'm talking to these folks, they tell me this is important legislation that should move forward in a proactive manner and should be supported by all members of this House. Whether it's

my private member's bill means nothing to me. You know what? If the government was to bring out a law-and-order bill, I would be supporting this part of the bill for sure, because I believe very strongly in the reasons why we'd bring this forward.

I wanted to add a couple of other things from the bill. I understand that Minister Broten feels that she doesn't need this bill; that's what I'm understanding. We've got a number—I can't get into reading all the different letters. She feels that it's not required. She has written letters back and forth, and I can tell you that if I had enough time today to read all the different letters—letters have come back as recently as November 12 to the minister, saying, "You know what? No, we do need this. You're not quite accurate in what you're saying about drug-endangered children, and we, as the police officers of the province of Ontario, believe that this is what is required to better protect our children."

I know the minister is not here today. I wish she were, because I'd like to hear her comments in debate. But the reality is, I'm hoping that the government members who are here today, and the third party members, will get behind me on this and they'll get behind our caucus, as we have on so many of their private members' bills. These are positive movements as far as private members' hours are concerned. We don't just bring these things up as some kind of a joke just to be disbanded forever. This bill will help protect young men and women, young boys and girls in these situations we hear of almost every day. Almost every day, if you read any kind of clippings, you will hear, in some part of the province or in some part of the cities etc., of situations where there have been a lot of drugs confiscated in a grow op or whatever it may be. In a lot of cases there actually are children there who are endangered.

I wanted to also add a couple of things here. Mr. Clark is adding comments from the OACP, but I did want to say to you—I did have a couple of other things here I wanted to bring in, but the first private member's hour went a little bit faster than I thought it would and I got rushed to get down here. I didn't realize the Leamington bill didn't have more interest in it, so I'm a little bit behind in my organization, because, as you know, it has been kind of a crazy day around here.

Anyhow, we've asked for this legislation. We know that it will protect children, and that's what we are all about here as legislators. I think if you look at the support we've seen from the OACP, from the RCMP, from the province of Alberta, I don't think all these people are wrong. I think that this is an opportunity that they should move forward with.

I think I'm going to save a little bit of my time. I know I've got an extra couple of minutes here now. I'm going to use my remaining time in my time I have to close down at the end, the final two minutes, and I'll add that with it.

Thank you very much, everyone, for the opportunity to bring this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Parkdale.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo:—High Park. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly rise in support of this bill. We do, in the New Democratic Party. It's a necessary bill for a number of reasons. I was somewhat saddened to hear that the Minister of Children and Youth Services is not supporting it. This seems to be a no-brainer. It's a very sad day when they wouldn't support something like this.

In my riding of Parkdale-High Park we've had our share of meth labs and grow ops, and these are not safe places. These are very unsafe places even for adults, never mind children, to be in. Meth labs routinely explode. Breathing in cocaine dust hurts you, addicts you, kills you, especially if you're little. Grow ops, the same. We've had fires in some of our high-rises in my riding. These are not places for children. The folks who continue to keep their children there should be stopped from doing so. It is a no-brainer, an absolute no-brainer. It is an illegal activity, and a dangerous illegal activity at that.

All that this bill is proposing is to make it a little less bureaucratic, a little less cumbersome for our police to do their job, to remove children to safer places.

Now, I would love to see this bill go to committee, because I think there are some other things to look at as well. There are a couple of caveats I would have, and that is that when you take a child away from their parents, it's no easy act. I think we all know that. There are not a lot of good foster homes. You don't want a child to be perpetually in the foster care system. You want, if at all possible—and I know children's aid tries to do this—to have the child return to their parents.

1450

I also know that we live in a province where there's virtually no rehabilitation treatment for people who can't afford it. For those who have drug and alcohol addiction issues, good luck, because there's a long waiting list for beds. There's a long waiting list. We saw this with the mental health and addictions committee, which travelled the province and came back with 23 recommendations, of which this government has only acted on one—one recommendation out of 23. We know that we see this bill against that backdrop, and it's a very sad backdrop indeed.

We in Parkdale started our own drug strategy group. It has been going for years now. The police are part of that. We looked at what the city of Toronto has done, which is really actually a pretty positive move. They looked at harm reduction, enforcement, education and treatment, the four legs of the response to the drug epidemic. We looked at it in the context of our own riding, which has had a history of mental health and addiction issues that have plagued us. We're making some incredible strides in that.

Certainly, we have the police to thank. I know that Chief Blair just came into my riding on Tuesday night along with 11 division, and a week before we had another community meeting with 14 and 11 division with Superintendent Ruth White and Staff Inspector Peter Lennox who came and showed, as they did to a standing-room-

only crowd a week ago, that they are the people's police in our neighbourhood. People could ask them questions about what was going on, in our case about a number of drug-related deaths.

Think about the children of those folks. Think about children who are living in households where people have guns and who are killing each other. We've had six shootings in six weeks in Parkdale—not far from my house, actually. People need to know that their children are safe.

My riding was also the home to Katelynn Sampson—a horrendous case. The most seasoned of police officers said that they had never seen anything worse. Little Katelynn Sampson was turned over to a home more easily than we would adopt out a dog. That happened, too. There's so much more we could do for our children.

I commend the member from Simcoe North for doing this much. Certainly Katelynn's death prompted this government to act. It took that, and it still wasn't enough, because I spoke to the principal of her public school, and still they don't have enough adult supervision; still they don't have what we used to call truancy officers, who will go out and follow a child. All that happened there was that they phoned the home, and the answer they got was that she'd gone back to her reservation. She was a First Nations child. They had no adults available who could follow that up to see whether it was true or not. It wasn't true, of course, with tragic, horrific results.

How many children live in poverty and live in these situations? It's staggering.

I would love to see this go to committee because it would give us a chance to look at the state of children in our community, one sixth of whom live in poverty, many of whom are growing up with parents who have mental health and addiction issues who are not getting the help they need—not because our social workers and our police forces and everyone else isn't overburdened but because this government is asleep at the wheel in terms of delivering those services to the people who need it most.

Here is a bill that attempts to do a little bit. In the course of looking at this bill in committee, we could look at some of that as well. What is the process of taking a child out? Where does the child go once they're with children's aid? Where are the foster families? What happens then? Where is the supervision of that? How do we look after the family, punish the criminal and deal with the addiction? These are huge and weighty issues.

What this bill proposes—it's very straightforward, and I want to make this very clear to those who are watching at home—is a very small move. It's an obvious move, which is why I reiterate that it's so sad we are not hearing from the minister responsible for the portfolio on this bill—very sad. This small move simply says that meth labs and grow ops, places for the active trafficking and manufacture of drugs, are no place for children. My goodness. If we in this House cannot agree on that, I worry. I know that my friends to the right of me worry too.

If we can't agree on that, a simple step—again, I know that this government does not have a good track record of passing private members' bills. In fact, zero private members' bill have passed from opposition members, which is sad in itself because there's a wealth of talent and information; there's a wealth of research on this side of the floor as well.

As the member from Simcoe North said, it's not about partisanship here; it's about getting the government—and only the government could act—to do the right thing. He said, as we have all said, that you learn to be a little humble on this side of the floor of this place. We just want what's right to be passed. Take the credit. Move forward. Have the minister do it, bring it in, and don't even mention Garfield's name—or the member from Simcoe North. We're used to that now on this side of the floor. We don't care. We just want to see some action taken that will protect the children in this province. It's asked for by no less a body than the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. How much more prestigious a body does it have to get before this government will act, asking a simple thing? Their members are in the field all the time, witnessing this.

My husband was a police officer briefly after high school, in the area of Kitchener. His mother actually worked not far from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo and under her ministry's jurisdiction. Since that experience, he went to university to become a detective and never looked back; he ended up teaching at university—unfortunately, I think, for the police force; fortunately for me. But he has never looked back in terms of his respect for those who do the duties of law enforcement in this province. He knows what goes into an average day in the life of a police officer. He knows it's not easy. He knows that we ask the police to do what we don't want to do. We ask them to go places we don't want to go. Trust me: You may be happy when a firefighter runs into your house, but you're not happy when a police officer does, by and large. They're not the most popular people in many communities, but in many communities, they're among the most necessary people. And that's a very hard job to do: part social worker, part enforcement officer, part guidance counsellor, part parent, part friend—they do it all.

We're talking here about some very dangerous places that they walk into. If any of you have watched the series *Breaking Bad*—it's a personal favourite in my household, among my kids and myself—it's about a high school teacher who ends up working in a meth lab, and you see what goes into the manufacture of methadren, which is a growing problem across this province, across this nation and across North America—across the world. It's a dangerous job. He's wearing what amounts to a radiation suit. That's how dangerous it is. And you can imagine: children in that environment?

Grow ops: We had one that was raided not far from where I live, not long ago, in my riding. A fire started; that's how they found out about it. This is a dangerous place. Imagine inhaling those fumes all the time. Imagine

them in the lungs of a tiny child. This is child abuse. Let's name it for what it is. The member's Bill 84 does that, and says, "Let's call it such and let's react in a way that we would if we saw child abuse; let's make it easier to get children out of there, out of unhealthy places." My only hope is that in committee we can look at the ways of getting them into healthy places, because that's the other side of the equation as well.

Just to sum up, we're supporting this in the New Democratic Party. It's a good bill; it's a good move. Thank you to the police chiefs for bringing it forward. Thank you to the member from Simcoe North for putting it into bill form and bringing it forward. Shame on the government, shame on the ministry, for not speaking to it and supporting it. We hope that we do hear something from the other side of the floor. We do hope still—we live in hope—that there is some action.

I'll leave it at that, and I look forward to the words especially from those across the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: In a very non-partisan way—as the member just spoke and then slammed everybody on this side, but I think what the member from Simcoe North is doing is very worthwhile. I think he really feels strongly about this initiative, and I commend him for doing this, because I've known him in the House for many years. This is something that he cares about. He does really feel that it's important to make these changes to better protect children in these horrific situations. I think it's something that I could support as a member. I don't have any major problems with it that I can see in what he's proposing.

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I hope that as this bill hopefully goes through the process, we can maybe see this bill become law one day. As many of you know around here, private members' bills don't happen automatically sometimes. We had one last week from the member from Essex for bone marrow transplants which was done very quickly, which was an excellent move.

I know in the past I've worked on a number of private members' bills, and I've seen a lot of my bills defeated. I don't blame anybody for defeating a bill because we all have differences of opinion, whether in opposition or in government, but in trying to convince members of the opposition, as the member from Simcoe North is trying to do, he's doing his job, and I encourage him to continue to advocate on behalf of this bill because I think it has a lot of merit. With continued effort, some of these bills do get passed.

I've had the good fortune of having a number of my initiatives either adopted by government or basically become law through the influence of a private member's bill, so I think there's a lot of merit in bills like this that are debated here and encouraged to be brought to fruition.

As the member said—and I think we all agree—it's just beyond belief that adults would expose children to these horrific dangers, dealing with everything from

crystal meth to marijuana grow ops to who knows what other drugs and dangers they're exposing children to.

Police officers, I'm sure, can tell us horrific stories about some of the conditions they find not only the homes in but the children or people living in them. It's sad to say that it's quite too frequent that this occurs.

It's not only in big cities like Toronto; it occurs in small communities all across Ontario. I know the crystal meth problem is one that is very prolific in smaller communities, for instance. Nobody is immune from this type of threat. Children, I think, all over Ontario could be exposed to this kind of danger, which is real and very, very harmful, to say the least.

I guess whether we like it or not, the children's aid society is going to be involved. They are important partners with the police in dealing with these very difficult situations in the endangerment of children. I know the children's aid societies are overwhelmed with the severity of some of these issues. They just don't seem to stop. As more sophisticated society gets, as more educated we supposedly get, it seems the number of horrific cases of abuse and so forth doesn't seem to end. It's just a continuing added burden on children's aid societies.

I know that over the last seven years we've had to increase funding for children's aid societies from \$500 million to \$1.4 billion a year. This is the burden that children's aid societies have had thrust upon them, and I'm sure they could even use more money, considering the issues they have before them. Luckily, we're able to continue to fund children's aid societies, because they are also very much on the front line of dealing with these situations.

Recently, we have taken some more measures to help aboriginal communities deal with this and help children's aid societies deal with their budget shortfalls, which are always a constant. They've always been a constant problem for children's aid societies under governments of all stripes.

I would say that it's critically important to look at the whole spectrum of the protection of children. By that, I mean everything from the early years centres, which are excellent places that give protection to children and give at least guidance to parents and a place for children and parents to go.

The all-day kindergarten is now coming in place. It's another stress reliever for families that's very important and that's coming to fruition. That has been done at great cost, but I think it's part of the future.

The ongoing pressure for child care spaces: You know, it is extremely stressful for families with young children who are trying to juggle two jobs, trying to take their children to child care and then rushing back from work to home in all kinds of weather—and the cost of child care. We all agree that there needs to be a national child care strategy, and hopefully that will come to fruition one day also, to help. Again, as I said, in the whole picture of helping children, we have to do more than put this burden on the shoulders of our police forces or our children's aid societies.

I think we also need to, again, condemn these practices because of these grow ops, as they call them. I know they can be almost industrial in size. I think there was one that they caught at the old Molson's beer factory up north of Innisfil; it was an incredibly huge operation. They might be found in basements and apartments, in small, little one-bedroom apartments. They're too common, and what they do is, in many cases, not only distribute these harmful drugs but they also put at risk people who are in those homes, especially, as the member from Simcoe North has said, if you've got children who are exposed to this. In many cases, these ruthless people who are engaged in drug manufacturing really don't care about the impact that may have on a child. So we need to look at ways of protecting children further.

I would say that this bill is worthy of support. It brings attention to this incredible, unconscionable act that puts children in danger, and I certainly have no qualms in supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to begin by congratulating my colleague from Simcoe North. Certainly, throughout his term here as an MPP, he has always demonstrated a very sincere and honest commitment to ensure that we uphold and protect the safety of the community. Again, he has always listened to the stakeholders with whom he has had the honour and privilege of interacting.

He has brought before us, of course, a bill that reflects the concerns of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. They have asked for help, and he is endeavouring to provide that help. Obviously, it will provide protection for drug endangered children, so I want to congratulate him for being responsive to real needs in this province, particularly the children who are in the care of adults. So I'm pleased to support and join the debate on Bill 84, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to provide protection to drug endangered children.

If you take a look, this is a very comprehensive and very carefully considered bill that would, if passed—and we hope it will—provide important protections for children by imposing some very significant consequences and penalties on people who do expose children to the manufacture and trafficking of illegal drugs. Ultimately, the bill will strengthen the existing Child and Family Services Act by addressing a previously neglected category of children exposed to harm.

I was disappointed to learn that the Minister of Children and Youth Services wasn't prepared or didn't think the bill was necessary. I can tell you I will be supporting this bill, because it does provide important protection for vulnerable children who are exposed to the dangers associated with living in homes that house marijuana grow operations or meth labs or are in any other way exposed to illegal drugs and their manufacturing and trafficking. This bill addresses an important issue, and I trust today it will be supported by the members in this House.

This bill would make a number of important changes to the existing Child and Family Services Act, and it's going to address the important challenges that child protection workers and police officers face when dealing with drug endangered children.

1510

This bill defines drug endangerment as a specific category of harm that is inflicted upon our children. It refers to the exposure of a child to the production and the trafficking of all illegal drugs listed in Canada's Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Under this category, children could be removed from circumstances in which they are drug endangered in a more timely and efficient manner than the current legislation allows, and that is important.

Moreover, the bill establishes the specific category of drug endangerment as a form of abuse and as a punishable offence. In doing so, the bill ensures that penalties can be applied against people who drug endanger children, either in the form of a fine of up to \$2,000 or imprisonment for up to two years, as per the existing stipulations outlined in section 85 of the Child and Family Services Act.

According to Superintendent Wayne Kalinski of the York Regional Police, "Over the past five years, York Regional Police officers have been involved in 113 incidents where they've had to rescue children from homes where drugs were being manufactured or trafficked." I would urge the members in this House to keep that in mind.

This is a relevant issue. This is happening in our communities in the province of Ontario today. This bill is needed because in many instances the existing legislation simply is not strong enough to enable the safe and swift removal of children from situations of drug endangerment. The existing legislation also fails to allow for the imposition of penalties. So today we have to recognize that there is more to do.

Today, there is no specific penalty for drug endangering a child. In many cases, children are returned to the homes from which they were removed, where they continue to be exposed to the dangers associated with the manufacturing and trafficking of illegal drugs.

I want to just quote the OACP president, Chief Daniel Parkinson, who said that "the current process of removing a drug endangered child from a grow op or other illegal drug production operation is much too time-consuming and bureaucratic ... because current child protection legislation doesn't clearly define children that are drug endangered...."

So I would urge us to do what is necessary. This is a relevant issue. The safety of our young children is important. We know that children living in grow ops experience safety issues in regard to fire. Today, recognize the bill is important. It gives child protection workers and police officers the tools they need. I would urge you to support the bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak to ballot item number 50, which is Bill 84, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to provide protection to drug endangered children, as proposed by the member for Simcoe North, Mr. Dunlop.

I know that colleagues from all sides of the House have done this, but I just want to recognize the member for Simcoe North for this bill. I think he has done tremendous work on this file. I had the pleasure of meeting with the folks from the Police Association of Ontario yesterday, and I met with the delegation that Mr. Dunlop introduced, and I can tell you, as a new member of this Legislature, that his respect in the police community is really enviable. I commend him for all of his work that he's done on that file to date.

Like my colleagues today, I will be speaking in favour of Bill 84. I think it gives us a real opportunity to speak out today. I know that the member for Simcoe North talked about the delegation here from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I want to thank them for taking time out of their busy schedule to support Mr. Dunlop. I will be reading some of their comments because I think they're very important. I will talk a little bit about a resource guide from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

To start, I just want to take this opportunity to talk about the fact that today we're talking about protecting children, protecting children who are exposed to an adult's involvement in drug activity, whether it be that of manufacturing or trafficking. It makes it very clear.

I think the member for Simcoe North has been very clear in his feelings about the fact that these children are abused and need our protection. As well, I know that there has been some discussion by some of the members about crystal meth and marijuana grow ops. But as well, we need to protect our young people in places where drugs are being sold.

I want to take this opportunity, too—I just met Toronto Police Superintendent Ron Taverner a few moments ago, and I think his quote back from that May 31, 2010, release is very appropriate: "When it comes to children, the status quo of current legislation shouldn't be acceptable to anyone. We've studied Mr. Dunlop's bill and know that it would help us save these children faster, while acting as a deterrent to the abusers who expose them to the high-risk lifestyle and many hazards of illegal drug production and trafficking." I think that's important to put on the record today.

As well, I have taken a lot of opportunities since I was elected in this House to look at the work of Mr. Dunlop, the member for Simcoe North.

There is a document that I have, Drug Endangered Children: Equating Drug Activity to Child Abuse. It is a resource guide that the RCMP put forward in 2009 that they use as an intervention tool to remove children from homes where illicit drug production operations are suspected. The model allows for enhanced collaboration between our police forces, child welfare services, pediatric practitioners and other stakeholders to respond

more effectively and more efficiently in situations where children are believed to be at risk of serious harm due to exposure to drug activity.

In this document, there is a number of quotes that I want to read in the limited time that I have. "It's very shocking," said Detective Kory Keeping of the York Regional Police after discovering a grow op in an Ontario home. 'Every time we go to a house and find children, it pulls at our heartstrings. The living conditions range from very filthy environments to houses where the upstairs is used as a living quarters and the downstairs is a commercial grow operation.'

'Paul Jenkinson, chair of the BC Association of Social Workers: 'Children found in a grow op have been put in harm's way by their parents. These children are in danger of poison because of the large amount of fertilizers [and moulds] in close proximity. The electrical bypass that steals electricity from hydro companies puts children at risk of electrocution and house fires. Barred windows and multiple locks on doors mean the children will have no way of escape if a fire breaks out. The very real threat of grow rip-offs by rival gangs or growers puts the children at risk of violence, guns, and beating occurring around or to them.'"

This is an extremely important issue. It is an important issue, as the RCMP guide says, to engage all who are involved in this—not just the police but also child welfare services and people in the industry. I think we have a real opportunity today to rally around and support Bill 84. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted and honoured to stand up in my place to speak and comment on Bill 84, Child and Family Services Amendment Act, to protect the children who are put in danger in drug situations.

First, I want to congratulate the member from Simcoe for bringing such an important issue to the House. I see a lot of advocates, people and police; many good people came today to listen to this debate.

I listened to many speakers who spoke before me about this important issue. There's no doubt in my mind that it's important not just for us on this side but for all the members in this House and all the people in this province.

1520

As you know, we hear a lot about it. We hear about kids found in grow operations, in drug operations, or that their family is dealing with drugs. Or it's a drug dealers' house and it happens to be that they have kids, and the kids witness all these difficult circumstances. They're being forced to live in an environment that will affect them in the future, will put them in danger.

That's why I believe our government paid a lot of attention to this issue. We invested more than \$800,000 with the police across the province of Ontario to create a special unit to tackle these issues and also to train the police in Ontario to deal with these issues in a professional manner. Also, the children's aid societies across

the province of Ontario, in conjunction with the police, which—very often, many of the children's aid societies and agencies across Ontario have a police presence in their administrations. They work together in order to make sure all the kids will be protected in all these drug operations in Ontario, that when they raid or try to close them down, they make sure these kids will be in the hands of the safe environment of the children's aid society and many other agencies across the province of Ontario.

Also, we invested more than \$1.5 million to train special units with the OPP to make sure all these operations run in a proper manner and also that all these kids who have been found in the drug operations' facilities or homes will be placed in a good environment.

It's important too, when we announced the 1,000 police officers across the province of Ontario, we dedicated 128 officers to deal with this issue. I think it's important for us. It's not just important for a certain community or a certain party or a certain group; it's important for all of us in the province of Ontario because our intention is to focus on our children. Children for us in the province of Ontario are the future; they are the future of this province. Therefore, we have the responsibility to make sure all the kids get the proper education, that they live in a proper environment and are protected from any harm. Therefore, I think it's a very important issue to debate in the House.

I think it's a very important issue to carry on in the future, to make sure all the kids are not being put in a harmful environment and difficult circumstances, because as you know, kids have no capacity—they are vulnerable; they don't know any better when they are still young. They require a lot of attention, a lot of support. Therefore, I think there's a mechanism to be put in place, in conjunction with what we did in the past, to make sure all the kids across the province of Ontario live in peace and harmony, live in normal circumstances, go on a regular basis to school; that they are learning the best things about life, not about the bad things, and are not being put in danger, especially in a drug environment.

In the end, I want to thank my colleague from Simcoe for bringing such an important issue to us to debate. I think it's a non-partisan issue. I think all of us in this place are concerned about the future of the kids. Therefore, we are here to create a special mechanism to protect them and create a good environment for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Simcoe North has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Parkdale-High Park, Eglinton-Lawrence, Waterloo, Leads-Grenville and London-Fanshawe for their comments this afternoon, and I appreciate some of the positive comments about it.

I want to just sum up by reading a couple of comments out of a letter sent on November 15 from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police president, Robert Herman of the Thunder Bay Police Service, to the Honourable Laurel Broten. Basically, this is what he sums up:

"The current Child and Family Services Act does not clearly recognize that drug-endangered children even exist, because they're not even specifically mentioned as a category of children in need of protection.

"The current Child and Family Services Act does not recognize that drug-endangering a child is a form of child abuse.

"The current Child and Family Services Act does not penalize people for drug-endangering a child, and this lack of a penalty or deterrent for drug-endangering a child has resulted in the turnstile effect of children being returned countless times to the homes of their drug-endangering abusers.

"The current Child and Family Services Act does not recognize that drug-endangering a child isn't just about exposing them to illegal drugs—it's also about exposing them to the trafficking of illegal drugs."

I really appreciate the leadership shown on this bill by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. Guys, I really do thank you all so much for being here today.

As we were just talking about, in a few minutes we're coming up to speak about an OSPCA resolution. The reality is that the OSPCA inspectors have more authority going after a dog or a cat or going onto someone's property than these gentlemen do, heading all the police services in the province, going after children who have been endangered by people who expose them to drugs. That is unbelievable. You know what? We should all get together. Even if the minister has to bring her own bill forward and make it a government bill, we'll support that bill. But if not, after the next election you can be sure of one thing: I will be pushing our caucus to create legislation to make this bill, Bill 84, a reality down the road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on Mr. Dunlop's bill in about 50 minutes.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Klees moves private members' notice of motion number 36. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Frank Klees: The objective of the resolution before us today is to strengthen the ability of the OSPCA

to carry out its mandate, to ensure it is adequately resourced, has provincial oversight and can carry out its responsibilities without the inherent conflict of interest which is unavoidable under the existing structure.

The importance of this issue is evident by the number of people who have made the effort to be here today to witness this debate. Joining us in the galleries are supporters of this resolution from across the province. I thank them for making the effort to come here from as far away as Timmins, St. Thomas and London, eastern Ontario and throughout the GTA.

The reasons that people feel strongly about this issue are as varied and distinct as the signatures on the thousands of petitions that were submitted in support of this resolution over the last number of months. What is common, however, are the recurring experiences with the OSPCA that point to the need for more accountability and transparency; proper resourcing and training of its staff, especially those empowered with inspection and enforcement powers; and, most importantly, the need for provincial oversight.

The OSPCA has historically been a highly respected organization that enjoyed broad public support for its stated mission to facilitate and provide for province-wide leadership on matters relating to the prevention of cruelty of animals and the promotion of animal welfare. Dedicated staff, an army of committed volunteers and generous donors have attempted to fulfill that mission over the years, and we gratefully acknowledge their contribution to animal welfare in our province. However, there is a growing gap between the OSPCA's stated goal and its ability to deliver on that goal.

In fact, recent events in Toronto and Newmarket have confirmed that the OSPCA is incapable of meeting its mandated responsibilities under the current legislated framework. It was the OSPCA's plan to euthanize the entire population of 350 animals at its Newmarket shelter that drew province-wide attention to the lack of accountability and provincial oversight of the OSPCA. Despite the condemnation of the OSPCA's euthanasia plan by local veterinarians and the public, the OSPCA insisted on carrying on with its plan.

In response to my appeal to the Minister of Community Safety and the Minister of Agriculture to intervene and to order a stay of the killings, the ministers claimed that they had no authority to intervene, citing that the OSPCA is an independent body and that the government has confidence in the OSPCA and its board of directors.

1530

We now know that the minister's confidence in the OSPCA's decision was misplaced. There was, in fact, an alternative solution, and it was eventually put in place, but not until more than 100 animals had been killed.

There are many questions that have yet to be answered concerning the OSPCA's handling of the Newmarket shelter crisis, and I have every confidence that the independent review being conducted by the Honourable Patrick LeSage and Dr. Alan Meek will provide those

answers. I know that they are meeting with current and former OSPCA employees and volunteers, and they will hear the same evidence that was presented to me concerning the lack of training, the lack of supervision, the failure to follow protocol and procedures, and the lack of resources.

Each member of this Legislature received a copy of a binder which contains important information relating to this resolution. There are two sections in that binder that relate to current and former OSPCA employees, supervisors and inspection and enforcement officers. Their comments concerning the lack of training and supervision and inadequate resources are of particular relevance to this debate.

I urge the ministers and Liberal members who have been telling their constituents that they have confidence in the OSPCA to allow those submissions from front-line OSPCA employees and enforcement officers to inform them of the facts concerning the OSPCA's ability to deliver its mandated responsibilities.

I want to read into the record this submission from Mr. Mike Connor. When he retired from the OPP with the rank of chief superintendent, Mr. Connor assumed responsibilities with the OSPCA as director of operations. Here is what he has to say: "During my tenure with the Ontario SPCA it became apparent to me and even somewhat shocking that a charity had the mandate to be responsible for enforcement of criminal offences in this day and age.

"The management staff of enforcement activities were doing their job with little or no training in either the enforcement or management areas. Recruitment, training and supervision of the field inspectors and agents were done on an ad hoc basis....

"As the Ontario SPCA was a charity, the amount of financial resources available for the program was constantly changing based on the success of fundraising efforts.

"The end result was there were not enough funds to adequately train and supervise the field personnel."

I draw members' attention to the following submission from Mr. Rob MacLean: "After a 20-plus year career as a military police officer, I was hired as the regional inspector of the OSPCA, answering only to the provincial chief inspector.

"I attended both agent and inspector training courses at the provincial office ... which totalled approximately 15 training days" in total.

"I left the OSPCA in January 2005 out of frustration and professional ethical standards as I could not participate in the absolutely disgraceful conduct being forced upon Ontarians by the OSPCA activist methods, all the while hiding behind a piece of provincial legislation.

"As a law enforcement professional, I was shocked and appalled at the lack of law enforcement training conducted....

"The SPCA agents and inspectors are not just handing out parking tickets, they are laying Criminal Code charges."

There are numerous other submissions with identical testimony. I want to read just one more from Erika Longman, a former OSPCA cruelty agent and general manager of an OSPCA shelter: "Mr. Duncan's comments have me concerned that the Premier's office is truly unaware of the current state of affairs.... With no government oversight, there is no way to confirm that training is adequate. I agree that currently, it is not." Erika Longman has it right. The Premier's office, the minister's office and the government backbenchers are apparently unaware of the current state of affairs.

And speaking of the current state of affairs, how can the minister and government members ignore the embarrassing conduct of the OSPCA's so-called professionals in the very high profile raid on the Toronto Humane Society? Forty-three charges were laid OSPCA officers, all of which were withdrawn after review by the crown attorney.

In the summary of the crown's reasons for withdrawal of charges, the crown identified numerous incidents of inappropriate and unprofessional conduct on the part of OSPCA agents, further evidence of the serious concerns regarding the lack of training, supervision and resourcing, as described in the submissions of OSPCA employees.

Of particular relevance to this debate is the fact that the crown underscored the inherent conflict of interest in the existing OSPCA structure. I quote from the crown's summary: "The crown is aware that defence counsel for each of the parties charged will be strenuously advancing an abuse of process motion. Such a motion would involve a comprehensive analysis of the motivations of the OSPCA in initiating the investigation and laying the charges, the manner and execution of the search warrant and the arguable conflict of interest inherent in the OSPCA serving as the expert and the investigating authority in the context of being a privately funded organization with policing powers. It is the crown's view that these issues would adversely impact our ability to successfully prosecute the allegations before the court."

The fact that every one of the 43 charges against the Toronto Humane Society were withdrawn for the reasons just set out proves the point that the OSPCA staff, agents and inspectors were inadequately trained, supervised and resourced to carry out their mandated legislative responsibilities. How can this Legislature ignore that fact and how can this government refuse to take the steps proposed in this resolution to address these very serious issues?

The crown's stated concerns regarding the inherent conflict also confirm that the current structure, which empowers the OSPCA with policing powers while operating as a privately funded charitable organization, cannot be allowed to continue.

Finally, I remind members that there's no such thing as perfect legislation. At best, it's a work in progress, and we, as legislators, have the responsibility to amend legislation when we know it's necessary to do that. I believe by adopting the resolution before us today, it will be an

important first step in that direction and in restoring public confidence in the animal welfare system in Ontario.

In closing, I want to share this email, which was received in my office late yesterday afternoon. I ask members to consider it as we continue to deliberate on this issue this afternoon:

"Mr. Klees, on behalf of the board of directors of the Hamilton/Burlington SPCA, an affiliate of the OSPCA, I would like to inform you that we, in principle, are in agreement and support the resolution being placed before the Ontario Legislature on November 18, 2010.

"Sincerely,

"Keith Scott

"Chief executive officer

"Hamilton/Burlington SPCA."

I trust that members will consider seriously the words of employees, agents, officers and volunteers of the OSPCA who are calling out for help from this government to implement the intent of this resolution, to review those powers, to restore public confidence in an organization that's been entrusted with serious responsibilities, and that we do what is necessary to remove the conflict of interest to ensure that there is proper provincial oversight so that we can, in fact, ensure that we have a strong animal welfare system in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Just before we go to the next speaker, I misspoke a few minutes ago when I said we'd vote in 50 minutes. We actually are ahead of ourselves today; we won't be voting on any items until about 4:40, just so the members know.

Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I couldn't agree more and I couldn't support more this initiative by the member from Newmarket-Aurora.

1540

I want to take the House and those who are watching at home back to a time many years ago in the life of my family when, through unfortunate circumstances, we had to euthanize our dog. Without going into detail, let me say we tried everything else, until we were forced to get to that point. Just years before that, my children had lost their father in a tragic car accident, so we were no innocents when it came to trauma. But let me tell you, the experience of going into that room and watching a beloved family animal put down, even when it needed to be done, was horrific. We suffered for weeks. In fact, I still feel tears coming to my eyes talking about it, and that was years and years ago. Now imagine the volunteers and the staff at the OSPCA in this branch who had to put down over 100 animals.

I was struck by the member from Newmarket-Aurora looking at the OSPCA in, I think, a very, very generous way. He failed to quote—and I will, because I know he didn't have time—some of the comments of the staff who actually had to do the dirty work. One said, "I am also concerned that donations to animal welfare must be funding what I see as a public relations exercise." She was horrified at what was going on. Another talked about

"the slaughter of innocent lives that could have and should still be prevented. There must be another way!!" Imagine going home from work at a place like that—"a virtual killing field," described one letter.

And then take this into account: There still has not been any evidence shown that they had ringworm at all, and even if they did, veterinarian after veterinarian after veterinarian has said it's a treatable disease. In fact, one veterinarian said that he had volunteered at the OSPCA and had asked for the transfer of 32 so-called infected animals, 10% of the total, to their clinic for free treatment—and never heard back. We're not talking about one animal. We're not talking about two animals. We're talking about over 100 animals. And the 114 that were saved have also not been demonstrated to have been infected by ringworm.

Think about it, even if you take the OSPCA's story, what does it say about them that so many animals under their care were infected by a preventable disease? What does it say about their systems of hygiene? What does it say about their systems of training? What does it say about their ability to curtail such an epidemic? It's incredibly damning evidence, even if you take everything that they say at face value.

Of course, you can take former CEOs' testimony too. Again, my friend didn't have the time to talk about a former CEO who wrote a letter as well, who outlined the lack of adequate resources, the weak leadership, the lack of accountability, the lack of true unity. This was a former CEO of the OSPCA. You heard from another one. This is yet another one.

What do they do when they get their newfound powers under this government? Where do they go first? Not to a puppy mill. Not to a dogfighting ring. They go to raid their competitors. That's what they do. One has to shake one's head.

Of course, an issue near and dear to my heart, and I know to many who have come today: If they truly were about the prevention of cruelty, and not the promotion of cruelty, to animals, then they should be speaking out loudly against the breed-specific legislation that this government has brought in, under which about a thousand animals have been killed across the province. If they really were advocates for the welfare of animals, then they should be speaking out loudly about that. We don't even hear about that. That is done under the cover of darkness, except when the good people of organizations like stopcanineprofiling.ca or the Dog Legislation Council of Canada—I urge people who are watching to read and go to those sites. If they were really concerned about the welfare of animals, they would be making that their first order of business: to lobby this government to overturn that legislation that has been responsible for the deaths of animals simply because of the way they look, in the hundreds across this province.

I really laud, first of all, the incredible work that the member from Newmarket-Aurora has done. As he said, we each received a whole binder full of evidence, but I also have to say that this is evidence that is readily avail-

able to anybody. One has to ask why the government hasn't accessed it; why the minister responsible hasn't gone over this, interviewed these same deputants; why they haven't acted in a way that should be quite, I believe, dramatic before another animal is seized by these people, before another animal is euthanized, before another volunteer has to go through what can only be described as a traumatic experience simply because they want to volunteer or where a staff person has to quit and write a letter to an MPP about what they witnessed going on before someone acts.

This is a charity acting like a wing of the police force, a charity acting as if it were part of government, and the government, instead of supervising it and overseeing it, simply prefers to look the other way and let them go on, keep on keeping on. It's unacceptable, absolutely unacceptable and, I want to tell you also, unpopular. Thank goodness it's unpopular. Thank goodness the citizens of this province have risen up and are speaking out.

I witness here all the numbers that have come down, but let's look at—you know, there is a Stop Killing Dogs site with almost 100,000 members on Facebook. Supporting my bill, Hershey's law, there's a total of about 10,000 now on two different sites, and even 248 on a children's site saying, "Please overturn breed-specific legislation."

The OSPCA, meanwhile, chugs along. It chugs along and closes shelters even though their revenue has gone up. There's a question we might want to ask: Why is it that their reports to the Canada Revenue Agency have gone from \$2,270,000 in 2003 to \$16,813,000 in 2009, and yet they closed North York, Oxford county and Dryden in that same period of time? One might want to ask where the money is going. Where is the money going?

It's quite horrific. What is going on is quite horrific, and what continues to go on is quite horrific. There's not a week that goes by that we don't read an article about somebody's dog being seized, and quite frankly, some of these animals—it's not the people in Forest Hill or Rosedale. When animal services raids someone's property with warrantless entry and takes an animal, it's usually because they're pretty assured that this person is not going to fight back through the legal system, because we know what it costs. We know that there are many lawsuits against the OSPCA. We know they number in the tens of thousands of dollars and that not everyone can afford that.

I think of the poor woman out in Brampton, the Portuguese grandmother who had her dog taken out of her backyard and had to fight to get it returned. What kind of agency focuses on a grandmother in Brampton when they should be focusing on puppy mills, dog-fighting, all of the active abuse that's going on—and we know it is—in this province?

So absolutely, I support—and so do New Democrats—any attempt to supervise what has become a very questionable enterprise. Absolutely I support and absolutely so do all New Democrats support anything that

will allow us to further the welfare of our animals. Absolutely, oh, my goodness, do I support and do all New Democrats support anything that will prevent the actuality of having another family go through what we had to go through, another volunteer go through what we had to go through, another staff person have to go through what we had to go through, another CEO have to quit rather than go through what we had to go through. Horrendous. I can't imagine. Thank goodness; finally.

Again, the only thing I can say is that I wish I had brought it in myself. Thank you to the member from Newmarket–Aurora for his tirelessness on this issue, for his research on this issue, for his advocacy on this issue. There's no question that we will support it. The only reason that we're not all here Thursday afternoon is that many of our members have gone back to their far-flung ridings; it's not a question of lack of support that comes through a divided vote; it is simply the reality we all know about getting members out on Thursday afternoons.

1550

So here's to our dogs, here's to our cats, here's to our animals, here's to our animal welfare, and finally, I hope, here's to supervision of the OSPCA.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I also want to say thank you to the member from Newmarket–Aurora for his introduction of this resolution. I'll say from the outset that I do support his bringing this forward, and I think he has done very good work in this area. But I do not support the resolution, and I'm going to tell you why.

Some of you may know that I have been involved in animal welfare protection for a number of years. Over 10 years ago, I brought legislation before this House to try to close down puppy mills. I don't know if you know about puppy mills, but they are rampant all over North America—they were rampant in Ontario and still are today—where abusive people, for a profit, are housing and breeding animals in deplorable conditions. The member from Parkdale–High Park talks about the cat or the dog; we're talking about thousands of cats and dogs and birds being bred systematically for profit in the most horrific conditions: no light of day, being poorly fed, being bred when they're sick. It's incredible, and I've seen this first-hand, sad to say.

I travelled with animal welfare public officials and with ordinary people who cared about animals in small communities across Ontario and saw first-hand these deplorable mills that operated for profit and still operate for profit in this province because there are people who hide behind laws that are too weak, hide behind all kinds of excuses and continue to breed animals for profit, and they're sold to unsuspecting people. They're sold in newspapers. Pet stores in this province are selling puppy mill animals daily. In any city, they're selling puppy mill animals. They still do it in all our pet stores. Nothing stops them.

Go to markets. There's a place up in Downsview—somebody's flea market; Fred's Flea Market—selling puppy mill dogs. Last year, dogs that were diseased, obviously from a puppy mill, were being sold right in the middle of Toronto.

Anyway, I brought that legislation forward, and I had 220,000 signatures from across this province; 220,000 names of people who wanted the puppy mills closed. The bill was defeated unanimously by the opposition—unanimously defeated. It went nowhere. But I kept pursuing the issue, as the member from Newmarket is. He's pursuing this issue, which has to be pursued.

I'm not here to slam or condemn or witch-hunt the OSPCA. They're not perfect. We know that, as has been evidenced by what happened up in Newmarket. They're far from perfect, and that's why I fully support and await the findings of Justice LeSage, to see what he has found out there. I await that, and I think it's needed, because none of us accept what happened in Newmarket as being what we think the OSPCA or any other animal welfare protection agency should be engaged in—as with the Toronto Humane Society and what they were doing or not doing.

But as you know, these are charities. They are not for profit, they are volunteer-based and they get some support from government. But they are caught between a rock and a hard place. If they are too aggressive in protecting animals, they are condemned. If they are not aggressive enough, they are condemned by another side that thinks they should be more aggressive. You're always in a difficult situation when you're trying to protect animals in this province or in any other jurisdiction.

This goes on not only in Ontario but in Europe, in every state of the Union and across the country, where people who care about animals try to do something and are always condemned for trying to protect animals as being frivolous and not doing enough and not doing it right.

I think what we should be looking for is ways of making animal protection more meaningful, more comprehensive and more effective. What we're seeing here is basically doing something that I don't think achieves that.

Just last year, we finally passed updated animal protection legislation in the province in Ontario for the first time in 100 years. It was updated. We went across the province, and they criticized—

Interjection: You got it wrong.

Mr. Mike Colle: They just proved what I said. They're saying it was wrong.

The attempt to do something, which took over a year of hearings, meaningful input from all kinds of organizations—advocates, humane societies, OSPCA people—was wrong. But at least there was a very determined attempt by this government to pass legislation which is comprehensive and which was modernized to meet the reality of what's happening in this province in protecting vulnerable animals.

That's not to say that the legislation is about interfering with the daily activities of the agricultural com-

munity. It's about, generally speaking, protecting animals that are used or enjoyed as pets. That's where most of the abuse is. People who are trying to have healthy pets or to purchase or adopt a healthy pet are caught in this conundrum of not knowing where that pet came from.

Then we see that it is quite common to have huge dogs kept in apartments, never allowed to get outside of an apartment. A neighbour will complain: "That dog's been in the apartment. I haven't seen it for a week." What happens? That neighbour who complains then is caught for informing on their neighbour. Then, if animal control comes in from the city of Toronto or the OSPCA or the Toronto Humane Society, they're condemned for entering that person's property, for being too aggressive in trying to protect that animal that hasn't been out for a walk in a week. You can't win.

I think where we can do something better is by waiting for the report from Justice LeSage and seeing how we could improve the practices of the OSPCA to make it more effective, more responsible, more accountable.

But we also need to understand that attacking and condemning the OSPCA is not going to make it better for animals in the long run. We have to do more than just condemn the OSPCA and the mistakes that they made. Let's be a lot more thoughtful. Let's be a lot more comprehensive and understanding that the abuse of animals is systemic across this province, as it is across North America. Let's not talk about the food we eat. If you want to go there, we'll talk about that and how animals are treated.

So we must understand that at least last year, there was very progressive, meaningful new legislation passed that took the best ideas from across Canada to update our animal protection legislation. It was done. It's not perfect. Can it be improved? Yes. But let us do it after we get more evidence on how we can make it better and find out how we can fix problems that do exist. Let's not think that, by just pointing the finger at the people in Newmarket, it was their fault by themselves. I think it's part of the tip of the iceberg. Let's not just condemn and point fingers. Let's try and make things better for animals that are vulnerable and depending on us to stand up and speak for them because they can't speak for themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to support the resolution brought forward by my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora. Clearly, there are issues with the current system of animal welfare that need to be addressed, including ensuring that there is proper oversight and training of people who are enforcing our animal welfare laws.

I'm pleased to recognize the farmers and the farm organizations that are here today in support of this resolution. Many people may not realize that farm animals fall under the jurisdiction of the OSPCA, too. In fact, approximately 10%, or 1,500, of their calls each year relate to farm animals.

Dealing with farm animals and their needs is significantly different than dealing with household pets that are

being inadequately cared for. It requires proper education and training in large animal science and farm practices. If the OSPCA doesn't have the funding for proper training, it is putting not only the animals but those workers at risk.

1600

A number of farm groups have expressed concerns about the lack of oversight of the OSPCA. In a recent article, Crystal Mackay, executive director of the Ontario Farm Animal Council, was mentioned as saying that a movement towards government funding and oversight of the OSPCA's enforcement side is definitely a step in the right direction.

Bette Jean Crews, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, says that the federation is "totally supportive of government oversight of OSPCA."

As you know, Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, Bill 50 gave OSPCA agents and inspectors the right to enter any building or any place used for animal exhibit, entertainment, boarding, hire or sale without a warrant. There's nothing that ensures proper oversight or training regarding biosecurity. There is nothing to stop an OSPCA inspector from visiting multiple barns in one day without following the proper procedures, and as a result actually spreading disease to the animals that they are in charge of protecting.

Since there is no requirement for a search warrant, the farmer has no opportunity to object or explain the procedures needed. By the time the farmer or any animal owner has the opportunity to appeal, the damage may already be done: The barn has been contaminated or the animal has been euthanized.

If they do manage to appeal and go to the Animal Care Review Board, they face seven people, five of whom live in the city of Toronto. You might expect that the other two who aren't from Toronto would be farmers to ensure that someone with proper knowledge of normal farming practices would be there. Not so, unfortunately. One is from Ancaster; he's in marketing. One is from Kemptville and is a counsel with the Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals. In fact, only one member of that board is a veterinarian. Five of them are lawyers—not exactly an expert panel on animal care.

It is clear that the current system needs review. The current design results in conflicts of interest, inadequate training and funding, and doesn't work for the pet owners, farmers or animals that the system is supposed to protect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: During private members' time, I've always made the commitment to listen carefully to the debate and make a decision based on my own feelings regarding that because it is just that: private members' time. I will not be whipped, nor did I ever ask to whip anyone when I was whip. Private members' time is just that.

I want to start on that note and thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this up. I agree that

review is always healthy. Quite frankly, your asking for that review is reasonable. I don't have a problem with supporting that. I have a slight difficulty with the rest of the motion. If the review is to take place, then are we not pre-determining what you want in terms of the outcome before the review is finished? That's the part I would ask you to address in terms of making that assumption. It's not a criticism; it's just a question on the validity of the review. What happens if somebody does this review, a legislative counsel or a committee or whoever we send it to, and they come back and say, "Do you know what? We only need a few little tweaks about this; we don't need to do these other things that you're asking about"? If I'm getting it right, you're mandating what must happen before the review is done. I just need a response to that, if you don't mind.

The second thing is that I have received an email from Larry Davis, who is the area representative of the OFA, supporting your resolution. I've told him that I would pass that information on—and I have done so—to the minister, and now I'm telling you that I did receive that from the OFA, Larry Davis in our area.

Contrary to what the characterization is, a farm-experienced vet should be accompanying an OSPCA member in terms of an inspection of a complaint-laid reason for an inspection from the OSPCA onto a farm. If that does not happen, then the farmer has a right to ask for a vet to be present. During the deliberations on Bill 50, that was some of the clarity that I brought to them as I carried the bill. This is what is supposed to be happening with the agents and the training.

During our extensive stakeholder consultations during the bill, we had the Ontario Farm Animal Council; the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters; the humane societies; the WSPA; the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Anyone caught mistreating an animal can receive, as a result of the bill, jail time, fines of up to \$60,000, and potential lifetime ownership bans.

Some of those things have been included in the bill, but while we are asking for this review, I would like to know that we're talking about the application, how the bill would be applied to not just humane societies or not just the OSPCA, but also across the board with all animal ownership. The member knows that I've introduced a bill, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, in order for us to get a handle on wild, exotic animals being held in captivity or being owned. I would hope that that too would be able to be under the auspices of your review.

I've got about 25 minutes' worth of discussion points and others that I would like to make. I do want to tell the member that I continue to listen carefully to the debate. I will tell you what I would do, and you'll see by my vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to enter the debate today. I'm sorry; I have a very brief time in which to

really hope that in a few moments we will get some support.

1610

I've heard from lots of people. I, like many of the members on this side, have presented a number of petitions in support of the resolution. Even last evening, I heard again from farmers in my riding. Brian and Andra Wintonic wrote me a letter last night, a quick email, supporting today's resolution, and as farmers, they feel that the OSPCA powers are hanging them out to dry. Their last quote really says it all: "Our industry supports humane treatment of animals but we cannot support those who make decisions about our animals, with little or no knowledge of animal husbandry," signed the Wintonics. I think that's really important, and I know the member from Oxford talked about that.

Animal welfare is and always has been important: to my constituents, to me and to my party. Therefore, I am pleased to join this debate and congratulate my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora on his resolution.

We all know there are problems in Ontario's animal welfare system. The sad events at the Newmarket OSPCA are but one example. The whole saga with the raids, charges and then the dropping of charges at the Toronto Humane Society is another example. A lot of people are losing confidence in this government's attitude towards animal welfare, an attitude which seems to be one of neglect. This is not the attitude of our party. We know that animal welfare is important.

A good example of our party's commitment to animal welfare is our stand against puppy mills. In 2001, I was very proud to see my private member's bill to outlaw puppy mills passed by the Legislature. I was very pleased to have unanimous support of my bill from members of all parties. Puppy mills are the scene of abuse of animals, but I can report that my bill against these operations is working. Within 18 months of being passed into law, my bill was used successfully in court. The fine imposed was \$17,000, several times greater than the pre-existing maximum of \$2,000. It shows that we can work together in this House to help animals.

Again, what we're talking about is not another level of bureaucracy. We're not talking about it being taken over by the government; we're talking about a review. I think, as legislators, there are times that, perhaps, we don't do it right the first time. I believe this resolution that the member has presented really touches on that, that we do have an opportunity to make things right. We do have an opportunity to sit down, from all levels, from all sides of this Legislative Assembly, do the review and take away the conflicts, separate the powers of enforcement from the charitable side.

The current resolution is exactly right in calling on the government to establish "clearly defined and effective provincial oversight" and "to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA...." We need to ensure the highest standards of care in all animal protection centres in Ontario. We also need to restore public confidence in our animal protection system. Both of these actions are necessary, and this resolution will help. I hope the government members support it. They have to ask themselves what their party's animal welfare legacy is going to be. So far, their chief accomplishment is to ban pit bulls, leading to hundreds of dogs being unnecessarily euthanized. This is not much of a legacy.

I'm supportive of the humane society and the shelters in my area, in Brockville and Gananoque. Nothing—and I mean nothing—gets between my baby cat, Lily, and myself. Let me tell you, nothing gets between Lily and I. I'll tell you, if I was in that position where I had to make a choice, this resolution really says it all. It gives us the opportunity to bring back the balance, the mistakes from Bill 50.

Again, I support what Mr. Klees, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, is talking about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm pleased to speak in support of this resolution. People are talking about the failings of the SPCA, but what we're really talking about are the failings of this Legislature when we passed Bill 50. We know that our society believes that the fundamental requirement is for checks and balances in our society, and checks and balances can only be achieved by the separations of power. Bill 50 did not separate powers; Bill 50 combined powers, powers of charity and enforcement. And that's really where the failings are.

This resolution in large part is because of these two high-profile cases with the Toronto Humane Society and the Newmarket shelter, but those two failings really have been found throughout rural Ontario since the passage of Bill 50 on a multitude of farms and with landowners throughout this province. They have felt the failings of Bill 50 in the same fashion as the Toronto Humane Society and Newmarket.

I would like to ask this House, what do you think of any government service that is provided with enforce-

ment? Here we have a charitable organization that has police authority. They need the revenues from those authorities to fund themselves. Would we fund health care? Would we give doctors police authority and tell them that they have to raise revenues to pay for our health care? It is fundamentally wrong that we're saying to a charity, "You raise your funds by having the badge." It is absolutely atrocious—and we knew that this was going to happen. We raised these issues during the debates on Bill 50, but they were dismissed. They were just completely dismissed.

I'll go back—separations of power: That's what this review is looking at, a review of those authorities. We don't have to wait for Justice LeSage to understand the nature of society to understand what is fundamentally wrong with the OSPCA legislation.

I call on every private member here. Really, let's get back to the basics, let's get our legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Mr. Klees has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank all members who spoke to this proposed resolution. To the member from Brant, I want to assure him that when the resolution speaks about a review, that is precisely what I'm calling for. There is no intention whatsoever to presume what that review will, at the end of the day, do to change that legislation.

I have included in that resolution some areas that I believe are absolutely critical for that review to pursue. If, in fact, the review, held by and with all stakeholders, determines a certain solution that is, in fact, in the public interest, we'll live with that. But I can tell you that based on the evidence that I have presented, I believe that every person here has to conclude that there are serious problems inherent in the existing structure. You have heard from former employees and from current employees. You have heard from officers. You have heard from enforcement officers of the OSPCA who themselves are saying, "Help us. We need help. We need government oversight."

Yes, we have a new bill. However, what the recent events have shown us is that we need to revisit that bill and to ensure that the flaws that are there are fixed. That's our responsibility. How long do we want to wait? What else are we willing to allow to have happen until we are finally forced to do something about it?

This is a proactive opportunity for the Legislature. I would appeal to every member here today to consider the facts that have been presented and give us an opportunity to right the things that are wrong in the existing legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for that ballot item has expired, but I'll just explain to people why we can't vote until 4:40 today, and we can't change the rule through unanimous consent, and it's not debatable.

The standing orders very clearly say that from the time we begin the first ballot item under private members'

public business to the end of the third item, two and a half hours have to elapse. Two and a half hours are allotted, and that's to allow members that may be throughout the building or are out at meetings somewhere to know when to come back to have the vote and to give them some certainty.

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would love to actually make a motion to allow us to continue the debate on this issue if there's unanimous consent for that, because I believe there's so much more that we can say that would perhaps help to convince some of the people who are not quite yet convinced of this issue. So I would ask for unanimous consent to continue debate on this bill until such time as we're ready for the vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Nice try. The rules are pretty fixed here. Maybe some day we'll want to look at them again.

Mr. Frank Klees: On another point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Let me rule on that point of order, because I think this is going to go on for a while.

We're not composed as a full House right now, so we can't ask for unanimous consent, and the time is fixed in the standing orders.

Mr. Frank Klees: On another point of order, Mr. Speaker: In light of the fact that many people have travelled a long way, I'm going to invite everyone to join us for a reception in the Legislative dining room in the basement. Make your way to the elevators. I'll extend the invitation to all members of the House to join us as well. That'll give us an opportunity for some fellowship until such time as we return here for the vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Not a point of order, don't put it on my tab, and, pursuant to standing—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There are some introductions I would like to make here today associated with the folks from the OSPCA resolution. I'd like to recognize the following visitors in the House today who have come for this afternoon's debate on the OSPCA resolution: Fred, Anne, Alexander, Tristan and Kelden Probst; Sharron Purdy; Diane Cartwright; Michelle Langston; Eva McDowell; Wendell Palmer; Wayne and Virginia Ireland; Richard Anderson; Clarence and Rose Rutledge; and Allan and Rachel Pamilton. They're joining us here today for this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It's not a point of order, but welcome to Queen's Park.

Pursuant to standing order 98(e), private members' public business having concluded before the expiry of the two and a half hours allotted, the House is suspended until 4:40 today, at which time the questions will be put to the House.

The House suspended proceedings from 1620 to 1642.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd just ask members to please take their seats.

TEMISKAMING AND CHATHAM-KENT-
LEAMINGTON ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010

CONCERNANT TEMISKAMING
ET CHATHAM-KENT-LEAMINGTON

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 49, standing in the name of Mr. Hoy.

Mr. Hoy has moved second reading of Bill 132, An Act to change the name of the territorial district of Timiskaming and the electoral district of Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hoy.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agree to refer the bill? So ordered.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
AMENDMENT ACT

(PROTECTION OF DRUG
ENDANGERED CHILDREN), 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE
ET À LA FAMILLE
(PROTECTION DES ENFANTS
MENACÉS PAR LA DROGUE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 50.

Mr. Dunlop has moved second reading of Bill 84, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to provide protection to drug endangered children.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Dunlop.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Justice and social policy.

Interjection: Which one?

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I think I said justice policy. It's been a rough day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed. So referred to somewhere down the hall, the justice committee.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 51.

Mr. Klees has moved private member's notice of motion number 36. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1645 to 1650.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Brownell, Jim
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie

Hillier, Randy
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Miller, Paul

Munro, Julia
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remaining standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Fonseca, Peter
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Moridi, Reza

Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips moves adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1653.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

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Murdoch, Bill (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Oraziotti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener-Conestoga Elgin-Middlesex-London Scarborough-Agincourt	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London-Fanshawe Timiskaming-Cochrane Northumberland-Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton-Mississippi Mills Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
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Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
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Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
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Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
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Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
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Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
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Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Northern Ontario economy

Mr. David Oraziatti	3498
Hon. Michael Gravelle	3499

Rail line

Mr. John Yakabuski	3499
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	3499

Access to public lands

Mr. Gilles Bisson	3500
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	3500

Women's issues

Mr. Jeff Leal	3500
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	3500

Correction of record

Mr. David Zimmer	3501
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Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	3501
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DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 22 November 2010

Lundi 22 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 novembre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It's a pleasure for me today to welcome to the Legislature a number of members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance and to remind members that they have some lovely poinsettias and some great veggies, and that you should all check with your whip's office and pick up the card and see them in room 2 between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 pm to pick up your goodies.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too want to welcome the members from TOGA, the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, who are here today to update us on the state of the greenhouse industry and to share their holiday cheer.

It comes with a tag with the member's name on it to get those. I hope that all members will join TOGA for their lunch reception immediately following question period in committee room 2, and again, to come back down to the meeting and pick up their poinsettias from the greenhouse industry.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Today is Hamilton Day at Queen's Park, and I'd like to welcome all guests today who are from Hamilton, specifically the former MPP from Hamilton Judy Marsales, who is here with us today and who initiated Hamilton Day.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to welcome several guests to Queen's Park today: Mr. Barry Katsof of the paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria, or PNH, association; Hillary Handley, who also suffers from PNH; and her husband, Mr. John Girard. They're here to support Lucas Macieszka, who is awaiting life-saving treatment for his PNH.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: On behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I'd like to welcome all those here to Queen's Park for National Housing Day. Thank you for the important work you do to lift people out of poverty through affordable housing.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today page Sarah Charnock's guests: her mother, Christine Charnock; grandmother Nellie Thalman; aunt and uncle Marlene and James Morrell; uncle Mike Speckert; cousin Aeden Morrell; and friend Bonnie Irwin. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to invite all my colleagues to Lebanese Independence Day. We're going to have a reception in rooms 228 and 230. Everybody is welcome. We have a lot of Lebanese food and sweets.

Also, we have a special guest with us for whoever loves and supports and is a Maple Leafs fan: Nazem Kadri is coming here. He needs your support; he's playing tonight. Thank you. I would like to see every one of you here this afternoon.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery west, on behalf of page Drew Brennan, his father, Jay Brennan, who is a councillor in Smiths Falls—he was elected this fall—his stepmother, Jackie Kearney, and his grandmother Joyce Brennan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: They're not yet here, but I want to take a minute to introduce the Mohawk College Jazz Band and members of the Hamilton Philharmonic, both of which will be entertaining us later during Hamilton Day.

Mr. Frank Klees: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today Father Geoffrey Korz, parish priest of All Saints of North America Orthodox Church in Hamilton, his daughter, Miss Sophia Korz, and parishioners Ms. Danusia Husak, Mr. Lukian Husak and Mr. Zakhar Husak. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

I too would like to take the opportunity to welcome Judy Marsales, the former member from Hamilton West in the 35th Parliament, to the members' east gallery. Welcome back to the Legislature, Judy.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Reverend John Hartley, Barb Hartley, Joe Isgro, Tiz Isgro, Tony Sobczak, Diane Murphy, Grant Hall, my brother, Joe Peters, and my niece, former page Olivia Peters. Welcome to the Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Acting Premier: Acting Premier, your government is in full scramble mode. It's hard to keep track each day with the changing policies you have when it comes to energy or taxing.

Let me follow up here. Ontario families are paying a billion dollars a year in debt retirement charges on their

hydro bills. For some reason that you have not explained, you've postponed the time that expires until 2015. Your so-called Ontario clean energy benefit announced in last Thursday's economic statement will cost the same: a billion dollars a year. So let me get this straight: You're making Ontario families pay a billion dollars a year more for the debt retirement charge so you can take credit for handing them a billion dollars a year for your OCEB. Minister, are you trying to confuse Ontario families, or should the right name for your credit be the "only cooked up for the election boondoggle"?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Just to try to bring a little bit of—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I've got today's Ottawa Citizen—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the member opposite counts her chickens before the eggs have hatched.

First of all, the Leader of the Opposition was part of a government that brought in the debt retirement charge. So every time you pay that—and he brought it in because they wanted to saddle consumers with the hydro debt so they could sell the assets to the private sector. Ontarians don't want to go back to that.

Then, for the first four years they had that fee on, not only did they not use the money to pay down the hydro debt; they used the money to pay off their own hidden deficit on hydro. I believe strongly the people of Ontario don't want to go back to that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister continues his campaign to try to confuse Ontario families by talking about an entirely different part of the debt. You know you've collected \$7.8 billion that should have gone to retire the residual stranded debt. Instead of doing that, you've come up with your "only cooked up for the election boondoggle," your so-called 10% rebate, while you announced the next day that bills are going to go up by some 46% more.

Families are simply not buying that, I say to the Acting Premier. But that's exactly what the campaign to confuse Ontario families told you to do on page 2 of their strategy document that is circulating among a coalition of special interests who are dependent on massive subsidies for your green energy experiments. So you push back the retirement of the debt until 2015 so you can collect a billion dollars a year more just so you can hand it out and try to take credit for your OCEB. Do you really believe families think that's just a coincidence?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario families and ratepayers know that the McGuinty government has their best interests at heart. That overblown rhetoric that's designed to confuse people and the issues simply evades factual interpretation. If the member had actually looked at the documents, he would see that we are continuing to pay down the stranded debt. The reason for that \$7.8-

billion number—I will refer him to Hansard for last week; I gave him the answer to that. What Ontario ratepayers know is that that member and his party left this province on its knees in 2003. They left it on its knees because they charged ratepayers for four years without using the money to pay off the hydro debt. We're doing that. We're giving rate relief to all Ontarians. It's about building a newer, cleaner, greener energy system for future—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, you're accelerating a hydro crisis. Your HST tax grab has brought Ontario families to their knees, and now you're picking their pockets while you're at it. You know what that Sussex document said, the coalition of special interests benefiting from massive subsidies to your green energy experiments. You know as well that for some reason you've pushed off the down payment on the residual stranded debt till 2015. You have enough money to pay that down in 2010.

Let's get this straight: You're adding five more years for debt retirement charges on the backs of Ontario families and then you're claiming this OCEB for five years, to try to confuse people and take some credit. The facts, Minister, are so obvious, even your campaign to confuse Ontario families simply won't work. What makes you think you can pull the wool over the eyes of Ontario families who are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only thing Ontarians are confused about is what he's going to do about the electricity system; we haven't heard a word. I take it to mean then that the Conservatives will vote against the Ontario clean energy benefit. They've said it today: They'll vote against that. And that shouldn't surprise us, because instead of taking all that money from the debt retirement charge and paying it off, the debt went up in the first four years of that charge. People understand that. Every year it's come down a billion dollars on this government's watch. It will be defeased by 2016-18, which is ahead of the schedule laid out by that government. Let's make sure we have all the facts on the table.

They'll also understand about what was left. They left a hidden debt. They buried it in the deficit. We eliminated that deficit, just like we're eliminating this one to create jobs and make a better province for our children and grandchildren.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier: Your government is in full scramble mode. You seem to be throwing up all kinds of Hail Mary passes, hoping to get one to land, but Ontario families are seeing through this.

Let me see if I can understand exactly what their latest position is. On February 24, 2009, the then energy minister, George Smitherman, said that your expensive green energy experiment would only add 1% to hydro bills.

Then, just two weeks ago, Premier McGuinty said they were adding 3% to hydro bills. But now your own words in the fall economic statement say they will be much, much more. I ask the minister, is this just incompetence? Is it an attempt to confuse Ontario families? How much exactly are you driving up costs to your expensive energy experiments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It is about a stronger electricity system for all Ontarians. It is about a clean energy system where we eliminate coal-fired generation. It is about investing in a much better transmission grid. It is about saving people money in the long term because we are confronting the challenges today. This government remains committed to working with all Ontarians to rebuild the energy system, our electricity system; to make the kinds of investments that will ensure we never go back to the time that that government left us with where rates went up 30% in seven short months, where we had fears of brownouts and blackouts every summer, where the equivalent of Niagara Falls going dry came off the grid. Ontarians remember and they don't want to go back to that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Halton, your own leader wanted to ask a question, and you're shouting him down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, in your fall economic statement, you finally admitted that 56% of the increases Ontario families pay for hydro are to cover the cost of your expensive energy experiments. This is very important, because only two weeks ago Premier McGuinty said it was 3%. It is important for people to have faith that the Premier will give them the direct goods, that he will be straight, that believing the word of the Premier is something families can do, but sadly, it seems to be quite opposite when it comes to Premier McGuinty.

I ask the minister, why did the Premier say two weeks ago that it was 3%, and now you're saying it's 56%? Why are you trying to confuse Ontario families about exactly how much you're driving up rates in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What Ontarians aren't confused about is that we need cleaner power. What they're not confused about is that we need a safer, more reliable grid. With the changes we've made, we're going to achieve that, and Ontarians understand the importance of that. It's important to the creation of jobs in Hamilton, St. Catharines and Windsor. It's important to giving our industries in Waterloo the sense that their system is reliable and will continue to be on.

That member may try to confuse the numbers, take things out of context, mix it up, but what Ontarians won't be confused by is the appalling record that that party left, the condition not only of our electricity system but of our entire ability to deliver that electricity under that member's party. We're building a cleaner, greener energy system, and we're helping Ontarians move forward as we

transition to that system. It's the right thing to do, and unlike you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: What Ontario families desperately need from this government and this Premier is the truth. They need the facts. Your very own Premier two weeks ago said it would be a 3% increase, and now we've found out that it is much, much more.

But we understand why you're doing this. On page 2 in the strategy document from the coalition of special interests who are getting rich off the backs of massive subsidies from families' hydro bills, your goal is clear. You want to confuse families about the price we are paying for your expensive energy experiments. You've done this with the price of your Green Energy Act. You're doing it now with your debt retirement charge, postponing it until 2015 to stay on the bills. And you're doing it with your sudden backtracking when it comes to time-of-use smart meters.

Minister, why won't we actually get the straight facts? Why are you trying to confuse Ontario families each and every day when it comes to energy policy in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's all about clean energy for Ontario. It's all about a safer, more reliable grid. I remind the Leader of the Opposition of what he himself said on October 20 of this year. He said, "I think we paid a price for our energy policy in the previous government. Because we went and made a 180-degree turn." He's doing spins right now trying to make a coherent question.

The people of Ontario understand this: They will have a cleaner, more reliable energy system. They will have an energy system they can rely on. Their rates will go up, but we're helping them with that over the course of the next five years as we make the crucial investments that governments of all political stripes refused to make. It's the right policy. It's a clear policy. He can try to confuse it all he wants, but the people of Ontario are far too smart for that kind of game.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last week, the McGuinty government announced a 46% increase in hydro bills over the next five years. They then introduced legislation to create a 10% hydro rebate over the same five years. But the devil is in the detail. Why does the legislation allow cabinet to kill or reduce the rebate at any time without any debate?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that in three short years the government she was part of raised hydro rates 40%. I think we need to have a full and candid discussion about all of these issues.

1050

We have created the Ontario clean energy benefit to assist Ontarians as we move forward to rebuild an electricity system that was neglected for far too long. We've chosen this change to help those people as we make the

investments in new transmission, transmission lines that will bring power to our bigger cities and new green energy opportunities on family farms and on the roofs of arenas throughout this province.

We've chosen to take this path because it's the right path. It will lead to a stronger, more reliable system and over time, to lower, more affordable energy prices for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's bill states that the rebate will be available until 2015, but in section 2 it says that the government reserves the right to end it early by regulation, without any debate. Why is the McGuinty government giving itself the power to kill the rebate at any time without any debate?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the interest of complete accuracy, that's a relatively standard process in any government program, and the member opposite knows it.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They laugh.

What's important is that we have to make the investments in our energy system. We're putting windmills on farms, we're building solar installations throughout Ontario—we've come back from the brink. The government, in the choices it's made, has decided that we need a cleaner, more reliable energy system, and we're going to help consumers manage the cost of that as we move forward because that is absolutely the right thing to do.

It's about being candid with people. The member opposite would have people believe that she can lower energy prices; she can't. She won't acknowledge that; she won't acknowledge her own record. We're going to speak candidly with the people of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If a future government wants families to keep receiving this rebate, they have to introduce new legislation, but if they want to kill it they can do it around a cabinet table without any debate in a single afternoon. Why would this government give itself the power to kill the rebate early without any debate unless, of course, they plan to do exactly that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I take it to mean that that member and her party will now vote for the legislation because they support the clean energy benefit.

It's so typical of the NDP. They pretend that they're green one day and the next day they want to kill 50,000 green energy jobs. They speak against conservation. They're opposed to smart meters. They're opposed to closing coal plants. They offer no plan. They offer empty rhetoric. They exploit misunderstanding.

This government is about a clear and transparent debate about a better energy future with lower costs for Ontarians, so I'm glad to hear she supports the clean energy benefit. I know she will now vote for it because she knows, as we know, that it's the right thing to do as we rebuild our energy system in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to remind a number of honourable members of the import-

ance of being able to hear both the question and the answer. The occasional interjection is often very good for this place, but constant interjections are not helpful to any member in the House, and I would ask each member to act accordingly.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. The proposed bill of which I was just speaking also gives cabinet the power to lower the rebate without any debate. Why would this government give itself the power to lower the rebate at any time without any debate unless this is another promise that they intend on breaking?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I can see now that the NDP will be voting in favour of the benefit, and they acknowledge it. That's why we're moving forward with this, because I think the leader understands that this is, in fact, the right policy to pursue.

This is about building a clean, green energy system. It's about more conservation, it's about less emissions from coal and it's about helping Ontarians with the price of electricity as we move forward. These are the right choices to make.

I'm glad the leader of the third party supports the Ontario clean energy benefit. I will remind her that it goes beyond what she has asked us to do. We look forward to working with all Ontarians as we rebuild our energy sector and, at the same time, provide ratepayers with a bit of relief over the next five years to help them as we make those crucial investments in a brighter future for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families have heard promises of relief from this government before. In 2003, the Premier promised that hydro rates would be frozen for three years. Weeks after his election, he raised them. That same year, he promised he wouldn't raise taxes. Months later, he brought in a regressive health tax. Now the Premier is telling families that he has another plan to help out. Why should anybody believe him now?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The honest debate that Ontarians need to engage in around electricity pricing has to happen. The member opposite may not want to say what she would do. She may not want to acknowledge the mess our electricity system has been left in by governments of all parties. She may not want to acknowledge that there was enormous support for taking the price cap off when we did because Ontarians understood that they were paying for it in their taxes—and it was hidden—to the tune of \$1.5 billion over 18 months.

We need to have an honest, open and candid debate. I challenge that member to say what she would do to conserve energy, to clean the air up and to help consumers with their electricity bills as we move forward.

This is about a better future for our children. I'm glad to hear they're supporting this choice that we made. The

clean energy benefit will help Ontarians over the next five years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Struggling families facing hard times need real help, not a promise that only lasts until the votes are counted. The same government that promised no new taxes, frozen hydro rates and honest government has instead delivered unfair taxes, sky-high hydro rates and a string of broken promises. Now they're asking people to trust them again. Does the minister actually believe Ontarians will fall for this latest McGuinty government bait and switch?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Coming from a party that said that collective agreements were sacrosanct, then opened them and stripped them, it's just a little bit rich. Coming from a party that supported public auto insurance and then, when given the chance to do it, said that they couldn't do it; coming from a party that raised the sales tax, raised income taxes, it's just a little bit rich.

I challenge that member to move off the empty rhetoric and start telling Ontarians what they'll do to ensure that we have a cleaner environment, what they'll do to make sure that we have the wires—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: The only rhetoric is coming from you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, the rhetoric is coming from you, and a few others.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've laid out a very clear plan that will get us clean energy, a safer and more reliable system and will help consumers with their bills over the next five years as we transition.

It's about more jobs, it's about a better economy, and it's about an open and honest debate, where all of us in this Legislature acknowledge once and for all that we have to be honest about the price of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Health. On Friday, I learned that Lucas Maciesza, a 26-year-old Wellington county resident, was dying in hospital for lack of a life-saving medication approved by Health Canada, but not yet covered by Ontario's drug benefit program. Lucas suffers from PNH, a rare blood disease that is life-threatening. His doctors tell us that a new drug called Soliris is the cure he needs.

Last night, Lucas's father asked me to read a statement in this House to inform MPPs of Lucas's situation. I'm going to ask a page to deliver the whole statement to the minister. Lucas's father writes, "We request that immediate action be taken by the government of Ontario and Soliris be approved for Lucas and all who are suffering with this disease." When will the minister take that step to save Lucas's life?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for raising this issue in this Legislature. This is an issue that cuts across party lines. I want to say thank you to the member from Perth-Wellington and thank you to the member from St. Paul's, who have made sure that I understand the issue around this drug.

1100

What I can tell you is that we make decisions on what drugs are covered and what drugs are not covered based on evidence. It was our government that actually took these decisions out of the hands of politicians and put them where they belong: in the hands of the experts. I have asked the ministry to review as quickly as possible the evidence to ensure that people who could benefit from this drug do gain access.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? Member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is important to note that this drug has been approved by Health Canada for two years now. I think the minister understands that this is a life-and-death situation, quite literally, and I would urge her to get on with taking the proper steps to make this treatment available so that this young man can carry on.

You did promise that Ontario families would get health care where they need it, when they need it, and this is a clear example of some people being able to get treatments in hospitals where they live, while others are left out in the cold. Minister, can you please tell us what you specifically intend to do to deal with this situation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ontario's expert advisory panel, the Committee to Evaluate Drugs, has reviewed this drug on two separate occasions. At their most recent review, they recommended that Soliris not be funded under the Ontario public drug benefit program for the general treatment of PNH. However, the CED also advised that there may be a small subset of patients for whom Soliris may be effective. They are now reviewing that evidence.

It's very important to note that approval from Health Canada does not address the issue of efficacy of the drug; they look at the safety of the drug. There are many, many drugs that Health Canada approves that are not on the drug formulary here in Ontario and in other provinces.

LAND REGISTRATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Finance: Buried deep in the fine print of your economic outlook released last Thursday were a few scant details of a 50-year extension of the government's contract with Teranet. The last thing Ontario needs right now is a 407-type fire sale when it comes to this very important public asset. Will this government release the renegotiated Teranet contract with all the detailed schedules? Yes or no?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are happy to extend the agreement with Teranet that was created by the New Democratic Party. It proved to be a wise investment by the government of the day. The Conservatives indeed also extended that by taking this step. We're ensuring the

quality service that has been offered. We'll continue to do that. It's paying us \$1 billion up front.

We also, by the way, control the fees, and those will be held at one half of the consumer price index. We also will get royalty payments of \$50 million a year, plus we've used the money to pay down Ontario's debt. That yields another \$50 million.

I applaud the government of the day, the New Democratic Party government, for creating this situation. I'm glad we're able to extend it in a way that benefits all Ontario taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As much as I always appreciate praise from the Minister of Finance, I actually had asked him a question. Will he release the detailed agreement, the schedules, so that the people of Ontario can see what's going on? Will he, in fact, let people have that information? Can you give us the answer, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's all in the budget. The terms of the agreement are there—how prices are going to be managed over the next 50 years, how much we received in exchange, how much we're going to get in royalty payments and the approximate amount of interest that we'll get. That's approximate because, as the member well knows, interest rates vary over time.

This is the right deal. When the government of the day first made this move, it turned out to be a good investment. The previous Conservative government as well extended the lease and that turned out to be a good decision. This builds on those good decisions. I welcome the member's question and just refer him to the budget documents.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question to the Minister of Revenue is about helping families. Last week, the Minister of Finance delivered the government's fall economic update. There was a great deal of information in that update, including information about Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth. It included information on the government's plan for economic recovery and for making Ontario stronger. But what it didn't include was any reference to removing the HST off of hydro, something I know the third party has been keen to see happen. Minister, let me ask you straight up, can you explain why the government has not taken the HST off of hydro bills?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to thank the honourable member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for this very important question. He's a great advocate for our community.

The HST is part of a full tax package for our province. Firstly, I would like to highlight that we as a government have done more than what the NDP has asked for. People in Ontario are asking for help during lean times. We've listened, and that's what we're providing. While we make needed and unavoidable investments in the province's electricity system, we have proposed to provide a benefit of 10%. Our 10% goes above and beyond what the NDP was asking for. The HST is an important part of

our government's plan for economic recovery. Not only have we provided the benefit, but we have also introduced the most comprehensive tax—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: To add to my previous question, I'm hearing time and time again about how costs keep rising in my riding. Many constituents are attributing that to the HST, I think. Constituents have been contacting my office in Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale and asking me why prices on services and costs keep going up. Some of my constituents have asked me why the government has increased taxes on every good and service that is sold in the province.

Today is Hamilton Day, and the good people of Hamilton would like the minister to explain exactly what the government is doing to help families in my riding and the greater community of Hamilton.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Again it's a very important question. Our province now has a tax package that works for families. There's so much information out there, and I would encourage all members of this Legislature to set the record straight when it comes to our reforms. Your constituents, Hamiltonians and all Ontarians, know that 83% of the things that they purchase have not changed under the HST. This includes things like children's clothing, children's footwear, prescription medication, child care, car seats, diapers, books, foods under \$4 and newspapers, just to name some. Recognizing that some things have changed, we have provided \$12 billion in rebates, benefits and transitional support to Ontario families to help manage the transition and to make their life easier. It's also about creating 600,000 more jobs in the next 10 years. That's what our tax plan is all about.

SMART METERS

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Acting Premier. McGuinty Liberals are in full scramble mode when it comes to the energy file. The Premier thinks he is more intelligent and understanding than Ontario families, which is why he is forcing them to use the time-of-use meters. But now he's backtracking on time-of-use peak power, just in time for the election—too little, too late and too cynical. Ontario families will still have to pay for the expensive power this winter when the children are coming home from school and dinner is being prepared. Have you got any concern about that? Acting Premier, why would Ontario families have confidence in you when you keep changing it and making it up as you go?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Energy will have more to say about a range of energy issues tomorrow. But we disagree completely with that member and his party. Time-of-use metering is absolutely a top-notch conservation tool that families can use to help save on their energy bills. We have seen right here in Ontario, in the city of Woodstock for many years, a pilot project in place that saved those ratepayers almost 25% per year.

Jurisdictions across North America and around the world are moving to smart meters. Not only do they give

individual consumers the ability to manage their energy bills better; they also provide system savings overall.

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I'd remind the member opposite that with the condition our wires are in, we lose 15% just in moving power across them. We're trying to correct that and make a better system that allows people to save on their bills and is a smarter grid for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: The Ontario PCs and our leader, Tim Hudak, have been clear that Ontario families work hard but cannot keep up with skyrocketing hydro bills.

We've been clear, but the McGuinty Liberals have been scrambling. You've been backtracking on the impact of skyrocketing rates. You backtracked on the Oakville project that you said was absolutely necessary. You backtracked again on your time-of-use tax machines. With all of the backtracking, why would Ontario families trust anything you say on this or any file, especially just before an election?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On the question of smart meters, I don't ask them to take my word for it. Let's see what others have to say.

"It has been proposed to let people choose whether to pay a flat rate for their electricity or have time-of-use pricing. I believe this would be short-sighted," says Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner.

"With the new time-use-rate structure, all customers will pay closer to the actual cost for the power they use. On average, most farmers will pay ... less on time-of-use billing than they currently pay." That's from Don McCabe, of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Even Tom Adams, who I know was a big promoter of your market deregulation scheme, says: "Ultimately, it's going to be a minor win for the consumer. On balance, I think the smart meter is the right thing to do." That's Tom Adams, energy consultant.

We disagree with them. We're proceeding with smart meters. We're proceeding with the smart grid for a better future for our children.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. À l'automne 2007, le commissaire aux services en français, M. François Boileau, a reçu une plainte du Centre de services de santé Peel et Halton. Suite à son étude de la plainte, dans son rapport appelé *L'accès aux solutions*, le commissaire a recommandé que le ministère reconnaisse sans équivoque sa responsabilité ultime envers les services de santé en français. Le commissaire a également recommandé que la ministre propose des modèles pratiques et concrets de prestation de services en français et qu'ils soient mis en oeuvre avant la fin de 2010.

Est-ce que la ministre va rencontrer la date butoir émise par le commissaire aux services en français?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's really important to me and to our government that people receive the very best health care that they possibly can, and that includes receiving health care in their language.

We've made significant investments to help health services be delivered in many languages. French, of course, is different because it is an official language of Canada, so we take special care to ensure that services are available in both official languages.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ces gens attendent depuis plus d'une décennie. Le commissaire aux services en français a été mis en place spécifiquement pour ce genre de dilemme. La plainte exprime une volonté claire de la communauté francophone de se doter de services en français, et la ministre, dans sa réponse au commissaire, s'est formellement engagée à y voir et à adopter des mesures concrètes.

Les directives du commissaire sont claires et sans équivoque. Nous sommes à 39 jours de la date butoir. Je crois sincèrement que les francophones ne comptent pas pour le gouvernement McGuinty. Sinon, comment expliquer le manque flagrant d'action? Comment est-ce que la ministre peut bafouer le commissaire aux services en français de la sorte?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite raises an important issue. I do recall one of my very first moments as Minister of Health. I was approached by the minister of francophone affairs, urging me to move forward on the creation of les entités, the francophone entities, to ensure that French-language services are offered. We did, in fact, make that change, and we are committed to reporting by the end of the year.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, we speak a lot about the importance of newcomers in this House. We know that the 120,000 people who come to Ontario every year come to make a better life for themselves and their families. When newcomers arrive in Ontario, they want to get started on making that contribution right away through meaningful work that values their skills and experience. This is why many of them depend on job training and certification programs—so they can get to work doing what they are good at. We know the important programs that exist, and are helping these people regularly to take advantage of them. As a result, we know these people are helping our communities grow and prosper.

Could the minister tell us how this government's plan has been helping these new Ontarians and what meaningful actions have been taken to ensure they have the necessary skills and qualifications to thrive in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly thank the member for the question, and I want to say that this government understands that helping newcomers find work in their profession is the key to their success in Ontario.

We have a plan that's working, and we're getting results. We're breaking down the barriers for our new-

comers so that they can find work in their professions. For example, in 2006, we led the way with the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act and, today, we continue to lead the way with our successful bridge training programs.

These training programs are making a difference. They are helping thousands of newcomers get the Ontario training and experience that they need to get licensed and certified to work in their field. For example, since 2003, we've invested more than \$175 million to create over 200 different bridge training programs, and this has helped more than 40,000 newcomers find work in their profession. When our newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: But we know that there are newcomers working in jobs that do not match their education, experience and skills, because their preferred profession is one that requires precise credentials to ensure competency and public safety.

An example is that of foreign-trained pharmacists. There is no doubt that with the well-being and safety of families at stake, pharmacy is a profession for which we expect a high standard. These newcomer professionals almost certainly bring that knowledge, experience and expertise to the table, but often may find the difficulty lies in navigating the accreditation process more than any professional shortcomings. With pharmacists, a new entrant must first pass the Ontario College of Pharmacists' credentialing process in order to practise here.

The minister said in his previous answer that we are intent on removing barriers for newcomers to work in their chosen profession or trade. Could he share with the House, and our internationally trained pharmacists, what progress Ontario has made to help them get certified to practise in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I thank the member for the question. While there is still much more work for us to do, I can tell you that this government is making important progress. The McGuinty government's investments in bridge training for foreign-trained pharmacists is working. It's a program that I'm especially proud of. Because of this specific bridge training program, our foreign-trained pharmacists have improved their pharmacy licensing exam pass rates from only 20% to more than 90%. And of the 600 new pharmacists who are licensed each year, 400 of these 600 licences were issued to internationally trained pharmacists last year.

I'm also pleased to tell this House that the success of Ontario's pharmacist bridge training program has been recognized internationally. Ireland has recently created a pharmacist bridge training program modelled on Ontario's program. Because of these investments and our partnership with the Ontario College of Pharmacists, we're putting our newcomers to work—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, when will the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority brief the coalition of special interests you are working with to confuse Ontario families on the price they pay for Premier McGuinty's expensive energy experiments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The coalition of farmers who can now lease their land for windmills and still farm it—we work with them all the time. A coalition that includes environmentalists from all over Ontario praised the fact we've cut coal consumption as much as we have and that we're cleaning up our air. There is a range of people who support what we're doing, whether you talk about farmers, environmentalists or moms who have kids who use a puffer who want cleaner air.

We reject that party's approach to electricity. We are proceeding with clean, green, renewable power. We are shutting down coal. We are doing time-of-use meters because they give people the tools they need to save money on their electricity bills. Our coalition is consumers, farmers, environmentalists—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Bullet one of page 7 of the Sussex Strategy documents for the coalition to confuse Ontario families says that the coalition of special interests will coordinate with the Ministry of Energy and the OPA.

Anyone needing further proof that you were in on the campaign to confuse Ontario families need look no further than the confidential government information that was printed in the campaign documents, privileged information like when the long-term energy plan is going to be put before cabinet and how much more Ontario families will pay for hydro after the next election. You refused to release it to the media and you refused to release it to this assembly when asked for it, but the campaign to confuse Ontario families—it was released to them.

How did confidential information pass from your hands into the hands of a coalition of special interests who are behind the campaign to confuse Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only thing confusing is that member.

We're with farmers who want to have windmills and solar installations. We're with the towns of Tecumseh and LaSalle and Amherstburg that are putting solar installations on their roofs. We're with the farmers in Bruce county who want to sell power while they farm their fields. We're with the moms and dads who want cleaner air for their kids. We're with the 50,000 families who will have jobs as a result of our green energy policies.

We do have a coalition, and those special interests are moms and dads, farmers, environmentalists and Ontarians who want a job. That's our coalition. They'll vote for us. They'll reject going back to the old days of dirty

coal, big energy companies and private Tory backroom deals—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yelling doesn't make it better.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I agree with the member from Durham, who just commented that yelling does not make it better. Order, please.

New question.

SMART METERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Why are smart meters being installed in Windsor homes that are about to be demolished?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I just got my smart meter, and I know a number of my neighbours are—and unlike the Leader of the Opposition—and let me preface this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They laugh about it, but smart meters save people money. Smart meters save people money, and in order—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I would like to hear the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As the environment commissioner has said and as many other experts have said—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They do. We're going to proceed with them.

I'll give the supplementary to my colleague so that she can put some real light on what is obviously a question that's really torqued.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If nobody lives there, nobody's saving the money. This really does make it seem like they're not-so-smart meters after all. They were installed at homes to be demolished to make room for the planned Windsor-Essex Parkway.

The local utility actually blames the province for this stupidity. Their spokesperson says, "We are obliged by law to provide that service and at the present time part of providing that service is to install smart meters according to the provincial mandate."

Why does the province require smart meter installation in homes that are slated for demolition? How does that make any sense at all?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very astute of the member opposite to realize that, actually, we don't need smart meters on houses that are going to be demolished. In fact, that's going to stop.

The reality is that there are about 400 homes that are going to be demolished as a result of building the Windsor-Essex Parkway, which is a huge infrastructure project. The homes that are going to be demolished need—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When a house is going to be demolished, the heat and the services need to be kept in place until a couple of weeks before that is done. But the smart meters should have never been installed on those homes. That was a mistake. EnWin has been directed not to continue that practice.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, on Thursday, November 4, the Leader of the Opposition opened question period with a statement about Credit Valley Hospital that he knew to be inaccurate. Since then, the Leader of the Opposition has ordered other out-of-town Conservatives to repeat those remarks in this Legislature and in our local media.

Minister, you have clarified that patients are now and always have been treated with high-quality, hospital-clean, professional care in Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital. The minister has been to Credit Valley Hospital, but the out-of-town Conservative critics have not.

Would the minister speak about the new hospital space plus the renovated space now under construction at Credit Valley Hospital? Will the minister give the people of Mississauga an update on the construction of A and H blocks?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for this question. I want to start by saying that our government will continue to stand behind our front-line health care workers, who provide excellent care in this province of Ontario, even though the opposition continues to make unfounded, irresponsible allegations without even talking to anybody there first.

However, our government was the first to recognize the special needs of hospitals in high-growth areas by providing specific growth funding above and beyond the base funding for these hospitals. We're also supporting the redevelopment and expansion of Credit Valley Hospital to support the region's growing population. This expansion will enhance the quality of life for families in Mississauga and the surrounding communities. We're putting in almost 80 new beds, more than 27,000 square feet of new space, 70,000 square feet of renovated space—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Bob Delaney: The high-growth Mississauga neighbourhoods of Churchill Meadows, Lisgar, Meadowvale, Streetsville, Erin Mills and Clarkson, among many

others, look forward to the opening of our new hospital wing next year, under budget and ahead of schedule.

Credit Valley and 17 other brand new hospitals built or under way since 2003 lie in stark contrast with the former Conservative government, which closed 28 hospitals during its term in office and left us a crumbling hospital infrastructure to clean up.

People in Mississauga are outraged at the baseless allegations made by out-of-town, out-of-touch and out-of-principles Conservatives about our hospital.

Would the minister update the House on the province's 10-year infrastructure plan to coordinate capital investments across Ontario? Will this plan recognize the importance of continuing to invest in health care infrastructure?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): If you want to raise a point of order at the end of question period, you're quite welcome to.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Improved hospital infrastructure is the legacy of ReNew Ontario, this province's first-ever comprehensive long-term infrastructure plan. We launched the five-year, \$30-billion ReNew Ontario plan in 2005 and completed it a full year early in 2009. Next year, we launch a new unprecedented 10-year infrastructure plan. Planning helps us build and improve hospitals and other health care infrastructure where it is most needed and where it will most improve the quality of care.

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Many health care sector representatives attended the series of seven infrastructure consultations we've held across the province over the past several months. They reiterated the importance of health care infrastructure sustainability. I can assure them, as well as the member and all Ontarians, that just as health care infrastructure was an important part of ReNew Ontario, it will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Community Safety: During debate on the resolution calling for a review of the powers and authority of the OSPCA, the Legislature was presented with submissions from current and former OSPCA employees, inspection and enforcement officers, and current SPCA board members. Those submissions confirm that the OSPCA lacks the proper training, supervision and resources to carry out its mandated shelter services as well as its Criminal Code enforcement responsibilities, yet the government's direction to Liberal backbenchers was to ignore that evidence and to vote against that resolution.

How can this government justify blindly supporting the existing structure of the OSPCA—and knowing that it is incapable of carrying out its mandated responsibilities?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I would say it's exactly the same as it used to be when the Conservative government was in power, except that there is a strengthening of the laws that affect animal welfare in the province. You know that today the prospective agents, for instance, under the new training, would obtain a recent police clearance, provide a recent driver's licence abstract, pass a resumé screening process to ensure they meet the entry requirements, successfully complete a 40-hour online training course and pass a written exam prior to acceptance into the program. Once accepted into the program, all new agents are placed into the orientation phase of training, and all agents are subject to 15 days of classroom and hands-on training and a six-month on-the-job mentoring program where they are paired with senior—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister knows full well that by the evidence presented to this Legislature by existing and former officers charged with the responsibilities mandated by this legislation, that training is not being carried out; it is inadequate. The result is that the crown attorney, after reviewing all 43 charges laid by the OSPCA against the Toronto Humane Society, was forced to recommend to withdraw every single one of those charges, claiming that the investigation was botched. Why? Because the training is inadequate.

Liberal members of this House defeated the resolution that was to review the powers of the OSPCA to ensure that it could be properly resourced, properly trained to carry out those responsibilities.

I want to know from the minister, how long will this government ignore the clear evidence that the current structure of the OSPCA is inadequate to carry out its mandated responsibilities?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Day after day, members of your party get up and say that we shouldn't be increasing the public service, that we should not be putting more bureaucratic red tape in front of the people of the province of Ontario. What you are recommending, in fact, would involve the government of Ontario hiring new staff, the government of Ontario having more power to exercise, and a return to political decision-making as opposed to those who are non-political in the decision that they're making.

I want to indicate that there are even more things that have to happen now than when your government was in power. To move up, they have to, for instance, have four years of experience as a full-time agent, ensure all mandate requirements and re-certifications are complete and up to date, successfully—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last Thursday, the people of Sudbury supported a sold-out fundraiser at the Caruso Club to raise money for a PET scanner for the Sudbury Regional Hospital. I thank the many volunteers for their hard work. It was a beautiful gala.

The people of northeastern Ontario have spoken: through 25,000 petitions, through support from our municipalities and from First Nations, and now through paying for the PET scanner from their own pockets. We want equitable access to this technology—that's all.

Why is the minister ignoring the needs of people in northeastern Ontario by refusing to support a PET scanner at Sudbury Regional Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I certainly know that access to PET scanning is an important issue for all Ontarians. That's why we've made PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cardiac and cancer patients, where they've been proven to be clinically effective.

We will continue to evaluate, we will continue to fund this technology. Again, we turn to medical experts, people like Dr. Bill Evans and Terry Sullivan. We do have an Ontario PET steering committee.

More than 5,000 Ontario patients have received an Ontario-funded PET scan through the clinical trials process. We have the largest PET infrastructure in Canada. We have 10 PET scanners. It is important to note that there is no wait time for PET scanning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: There are 10 PET scanners. Some are in the northwest. All of the south is covered. The only region that doesn't have equitable access is the northeast. The minister is paying for PET scans presently being done in every region of Ontario, but not in the northeast.

There are naysayers out there who believe your government will continue to deny the people of northeastern Ontario access to PET scans even after we've purchased a PET scanner with our own money. They believe that the McGuinty government is so oblivious to the health care needs of the people of the northeast that we will be denied what every other hospital with a PET scanner is getting. What does the minister have to say to those naysayers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have demonstrated our support for expanding our health infrastructure and health service in the north, including the northeast: a new medical school, a brand new hospital, family health teams and nurse practitioner-led clinics. We have the new NRRR program to encourage physicians to locate there.

But when it comes to PET scans, let me quote from André Marin, our Ombudsman. What André Marin says is, "I am gratified that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has taken my concerns about patient access to PET scanning in 2009 seriously and acted."

Dr. Christopher O'Brien, the president of the Ontario Association of Nuclear Medicine, says, "Today's an-

nouncement is a step in the right direction and will benefit cancer and cardiac patients who meet the clinically proven indications for PET scans."

This is a service that is provided to all Ontarians. As I said in my initial reply, there is no wait time now for PET scans.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning health services in Peel and Halton. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(b), the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. The order for second reading of Bill 135 may therefore not be called today.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable David Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2011, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Dated November 18, 2010.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have the pleasure of welcoming guests from Pleasantville Public School in Richmond Hill. It's my pleasure to welcome Diane Giangrande, Maria Lansing, Helen Bambrough, Dr. Lisa Walsh, Sacha Lund and Ethan Koloditzky. Please join me in welcoming them to the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Royal Ontario Museum for their creation of two accessible exhibits. Thanks to an anonymous donor, two accessible programs at the ROM have recently been unveiled. They are tactile tours, which can be touched for

people who are blind, and guided American Sign Language tours for individuals who are deaf.

During the tactile tour, trained museum staff will guide individuals and encourage them to touch their way through a selection of objects from the world cultures and natural history galleries. These tours are offered the third Thursday of every month. Print material is provided in Braille to enhance the experience for individuals who are blind.

Sign-language-interpreted tours are offered the first Thursday of every month. They are led by students from the sign language interpreter program at George Brown College's School of Deaf and Deafblind Studies. The ROM is even offering sign language podcasts and descriptive audio guides. This is a great step in the right direction to ensure that deaf-blind individuals have access to cultural activities offered by the ROM, and the best part is, there's no additional cost to these tours, as they are part of the general admission for the museum.

I'd like to thank the Royal Ontario Museum for enhancing our museum experience so that more visitors can take part in ROM programs.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted, honoured and privileged to welcome with us here in the east gallery members of the Ontario optometrists' association. They are coming here today to witness the democratic process take place on a regular basis in the House and also to ask everyone to attend their event. Their annual event is going to be held here at Queen's Park, in rooms 228 and 230. Everybody is welcome.

They come on a yearly basis to create awareness about how important it is for us to protect our eyes and to create some kind of prevention mechanism. They are here in big numbers today to educate us and also to lobby us to protect our eyes because, as you know, our eyes are important to all of us. Without our eyes, we cannot see. We cannot enter the life around us. We cannot sense the life around us.

I'm delighted in this House to know many of them on a yearly basis when they come here and come to my office and many other offices to educate us on a regular basis about the importance of the prevention they make and they do on a yearly basis, whether by attending this place or coming to our offices to make sure all Ontarians live a healthy life and a protected life.

Again, I wish them all the luck and success. I would invite all my colleagues to attend the reception in 228 and 230 later on this afternoon.

GERALD KEOUGH

Mr. John Yakabuski: I rise today to pay respects to the late Gerald Keough, a resident of the town of Renfrew since 1951. Gerald held the distinction of being Canada's oldest active pilot, at 94 years of age, until he passed away this summer.

Gerald was born on August 18, 1916, the seventh of eight children, to proud Irish parents in Montreal. He was married in 1944 to Mary Lillian Wickham. Together they built a tightly knit family of 11 children, 17 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Mary predeceased him in 2003.

Professionally, Gerald worked for 40 years as an insurance agent in Renfrew. He was known as Honest Gerry to his clients, who trusted his wise guidance in making important life decisions.

His lifelong passion was born when he took his first flight in an airplane at age 11. He obtained his private pilot's licence in 1959 and became a charter member of the Champlain Flying Club. He incorporated flying into everything he did, even flying to his clients' homes to collect their premiums. He loved his plane, a small red-and-white Citabria with his initials, GPK, scrawled on the tail. After he retired, he used his plane to make social visits, never driving when he could fly.

The longevity of his love of flying was confirmed when he turned 80 and was inducted into the United Flying Octogenarians, aka the UFOs, an international flying club that requires its members to be at least that age and still flying solo.

A few years ago, I went to visit him at his home. It didn't take long to realize what a special person Gerald Keough was. The love and compassion he had for others and the kindness that emanated from him could not be denied. I will always remember the warmth of his personality.

Gerald was a committed Roman Catholic, calling his faith his "guide to right living" and his "key to heaven."

To the family and friends of Gerald Keough: He will be missed.

To Gerald: While your plane has been grounded, I am absolutely certain that you are now flying higher than you ever have before.

CITY OF HAMILTON

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton Day: Declaring that Hamilton is not a steel city anymore fails to respect and recognize our steel economic foundation, which should be protected and nurtured.

The Hamilton Day blitz five-point plan dismisses our once proud, viable steel economic engine. Mention of Stelco/US Steel and ArcelorMittal Dofasco ignores that there are enough steel orders for ArcelorMittal Dofasco to start up an old blast furnace and pick up lost orders from US Steel. Our steel plants can't even fill the domestic demand for steel. The only reason US Steel shut down was to break the backs of unions and get concessions from workers under the guise of a world recession.

Do we need better-educated workers? Obviously. But industries like steel need workers with job knowledge, skills and abilities that can only be gained through actually working in a plant. Combining on-the-job apprenticeship with coursework will make it better for em-

employers and the employee, who will have a diploma and the confidence to better their career. Many already have the trade papers that are equal at least to a college diploma.

Hamilton is a transportation hub, perfect for an NHL franchise—a health care city. We have the infrastructure; we have the workers; we have the transportation grid.

Funding from this government—an increasing unemployment rate is likely a result of job losses, something which should have a significant part of any Hamilton Day lobbying effort.

PLEASANTVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today I am pleased to tell the members of this House about the 50th anniversary of Pleasantville Public School in my riding of Richmond Hill.

This is quite an accomplishment. On October 19, 1960, Pleasantville Public School opened its doors for the first time. Since that day, thousands of students have passed through its doors.

The school's motto, or touchstone, reads in part as follows: "We look beyond the ordinary to achieve the extraordinary." I can say, from personal experience, that this school, with its dedicated teachers, volunteers, parents and students has continually gone beyond the extraordinary in educating our young students.

Dr. Lisa Walsh, school principal, and Diane Giangrande, York Region District School Board trustee, are here with us today. Accompanying them are Helen Bambrough and Maria Lansing, both school council co-chairs. As well, two grade 5 students, Sacha Lund and Ethan Koloditzky, are here in the gallery.

I wish Pleasantville Public School another 50 years of great success in educating our young students. I offer my best wishes to Pleasantville Public School on this important anniversary.

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GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. John O'Toole: The residents of my riding are struggling to get back on their feet and find jobs, and they are finding the biggest obstacle in their marketplace is the McGuinty government. This government, the McGuinty government, has put the kibosh on job growth not just in Durham but directly in Clarington. In order to comply with the provincial growth plan, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing eliminated 155 hectares of developable employment lands from the Durham region's official plan. Mayor-elect Adrian Foster describes it in this way: "It looks like the province has decided Clarington is a bedroom community." We don't see it that way.

The devil is in the details here. The McGuinty government is not only standing in the way of job growth but is doing so in such a way so that Clarington has no way of appealing this decision. The final decision on this

job growth area was released on October 27, just two days after the municipal election; how treacherous. The appeal period is only 20 days, which means the newly elected council and Mayor-elect Adrian Foster will not meet until the deadline has passed. They will have no chance to appeal to the McGuinty government's unilateral elimination of these employment lands, a very important initiative.

I call on this government to give the new Clarington council an extension and the necessary time to assess and appeal the decision arbitrarily made by the McGuinty government.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The McGuinty government has shown that it has both the leadership and the courage to make the difficult decisions that are needed to ensure that Ontario moves smartly into the future. We have modernized our tax system and made major investments to ensure Ontarians have a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that includes renewables and creates good jobs right here in our province. Examples include: Canadian Solar, 500 high-tech jobs in Guelph; Siemens, 900 jobs; WindTronics, 174 jobs in Windsor; and Lower Mattagami, 800 jobs in the Timmins-James Bay area.

The McGuinty government has listened to the concerns of my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex who are worried about increasing electricity costs that are a result of much-needed investments in the electricity system. The new Ontario clean energy benefit is one of the many initiatives that we have already taken to respond to the needs of Ontarians and provide families with much-needed financial relief. The Ontario clean energy benefit will provide a 10% benefit to help consumers manage rising electricity prices for the next five years, which is the time that it will take for price increases to moderate. This relief will help more than four million residential consumers and over 400,000 small businesses, farms and other consumers who are feeling the pinch of rising costs.

Savings like the clean energy benefit are helping save—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Ottawa Centre.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: During the 2009 recession, Ontario's manufacturing and services sectors were among the hardest hit in Canada. It hasn't been easy for many families and for this province to struggle out of these difficult economic straits, which makes it all the more impressive, and makes me all the more happy, to see that Ontario, with the strong leadership of the McGuinty government, is now leading the pack on the road to recovery. We have regained 75% of the jobs that were lost.

We are not prepared to declare victory, as it is clear much more needs to be done, but we can and should be

proud of the strength of Ontario's recovery, which is due to the hard work of Ontario families. As families regain confidence to go out and spend again and more people are finding good jobs, we are beginning to see the positive impact on our finances.

Most recently, in last week's fall economic statement, we learned that our deficit this year will be \$1 billion less than in the budget projection and almost 25% less than was estimated and reported a year ago. This is a sign of our province's economic recovery but it will also help that recovery along. It is allowing this government to ease the burden of paying for hydro on Ontario families, and it is lessening the burden of repaying our province's debt in the long term.

I'm proud to be part of a government that makes the right investments to bring our province out of recession today and lay the groundwork for Ontario's continued growth in years to come.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thursday's fall economic statement reinforced that our government continues to provide important initiatives that make life a bit easier and more affordable for Ontario families and seniors. The McGuinty government is introducing the Ontario clean energy benefit, which will reduce the cost of electricity by 10%.

This initiative is just the latest of many designed to help make life more affordable. We cut income taxes for nine out of 10 taxpayers. We enhanced sales and property tax credits for low- to middle-income families and individuals. We introduced the northern energy tax credit and the seniors' property tax and energy credit. And, as the Leader of the Opposition frequently calls for, we are saving Ontarians money so that they have more cash to spend on their priorities.

But the Leader of the Opposition has voted against our tax cut for families, leaving everyday Ontarians questioning his commitment to helping the family budget.

Ontario has recovered 75% of the jobs lost during the recession, as opposed to 10% in the United States. The opposition don't want to admit that Ontario is leading Canada when it comes to economic recovery. Our government gets it and we will continue to provide strong leadership for Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SAFETY CAMERAS), 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CAMÉRAS DE SÉCURITÉ)

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to safety cameras / Projet de loi 136, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les caméras de sécurité.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Caplan: The bill authorizes the Minister of Transportation and municipal councils to require the use of safety cameras in construction zones and community safety zones.

Section 25.14.1 is added to the act to create an exemption from the demerit point system for persons who are convicted of an offence based upon safety camera evidence.

The bill amends subsections 214.1(1) and (2) of the act to provide that a highway or part of a highway may be designated as a community safety zone if the highway adjoins or is adjacent to land on which a school, schoolyard, daycare, seniors' residence, community centre or playground is located.

The bill changes all references to photo radar systems in the act to safety cameras.

I hope it receives the support of all members of this Legislature.

LABOUR STABILITY IN THE INDUSTRIES OF FILM, TELEVISION, RADIO AND NEW MEDIA ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA STABILITÉ DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE DANS LES INDUSTRIES DU FILM, DE LA TÉLÉVISION, DE LA RADIO ET DES NOUVEAUX MÉDIAS

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to regulate labour relations in the industries of film, television, radio and new media / Projet de loi 137, Loi réglementant les relations de travail dans les industries du film, de la télévision, de la radio et des nouveaux médias.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The act is meant to take the existing labour agreements in the film and television industry that exist outside the Labour Relations Act and bring them into the act so they can make use of the mechanisms there for resolution of disputes. It is a labour stability bill.

PETITIONS

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

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"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities and society; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-list, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of these expensive private therapies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Deborah Matthews to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment" where and when they need it immediately.

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents and present it to one of the pages, Kyle.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to read a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Taron Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Taron Warranty

Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Taron Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Taron agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Taron and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I clearly agree with this. I'm going to sign it and give it to Kira to be delivered to the table.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment."

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we are the parents, educators and friends of students in the Peel region public school system; and

"Whereas Peel students have historically received less funding per pupil per annum when compared to their peers in other district school boards and, in particular, have inadequate" special needs resources; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario are entitled to equal opportunities in education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To recognize and provide for the \$18-million learning opportunities grant retroactively owed to Peel students;

"Implement measures to ensure ongoing funding is based on current census data and other key demographic indicators of student needs to ensure that Peel students receive a fair share of provincial education funding."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Emily.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Val Thérèse, Val Caron and Chelmsford, three communities in Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Jake to bring it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a

mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: This is a final submission of petitions delivered here by people from across the province who came to observe the debate on the OSPCA resolution this past Thursday. I will read this into the record, but the government has already ignored the thousands of petitions just like this by voting against that resolution.

The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park ... June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement

powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this final submission. It's disappointing that the government, the Liberal members, chose to vote against—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

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PENSION PLANS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for ‘loss of sponsor’ of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

“Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

“Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To amend the PBA regulations to permit the administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the ‘loss of sponsor’ scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to Breana to be delivered to the table.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is a petition I haven't read in a little while from the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do ... ;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: ... to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and ... to pass into law such a program, as described ... outlining the red box recycling initiative.”

It's a very interesting initiative. I and the member for Oakville have had a chance to visit the grade 7H students on two occasions, and I'm pleased to sign it and ask page William to carry it for me.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for ‘loss of sponsor’ of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

“Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

“Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To amend the PBA regulations to permit the administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the ‘loss of sponsor’ scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution.”

I agree with this petition, and I affix my name to it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients ...

“Whereas since October 2009, insured PET scans have been performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page Sarah to bring it to the clerks' table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 18, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other

matters / *Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As I was about to say just before we adjourned, today I will be talking about the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act.

I want to talk briefly about what the bill claims to do. I want to talk about the context within which this bill has been presented, the context within which Ontario is grappling with questions of water, and the performance of this government when it comes to environmental issues. Then I want to talk about the specific weaknesses and strengths of the bill and what I believe is needed to make it truly useful to the people of this province.

But before I get into that detail, I want to address comments made by the parliamentary assistant, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, before we adjourned roughly 10 days ago. I appreciated her comments on the opening statements made by a variety of members. She was quite correct when she said that I approach these matters with a great deal of ambition.

I want to take—borrow—an analogy used by my colleague the member from Welland, Mr. Kormos, who talked about the difference between throwing a 50-foot line to someone who is 100 feet from shore and throwing a 100-foot line to someone who is 100 feet from shore. Both activities show some goodwill, but only one act will save that person from drowning. So I say to the Liberal government that, to the extent that you are only throwing a 50-foot line, you are not resolving the problems that have to be addressed.

There are times when one seeks balance in legislation—in fact, one seeks balance a great deal of the time—but there are also situations where one has an on/off switch: Something works or doesn't work. One has to understand when one encounters those situations, and one has to act appropriately.

I want to say to the parliamentary assistant that I thank her for the work she did prior to debate in committee, because there was great concern on the part of the NDP and there was great concern on the part of trade unions and environmental organizations about the potential for this bill to be used to privatize delivery of—provision of—public water services. The parliamentary assistant took time on weekends and in evenings to sort through that question, and she came forward with a wording that is incorporated in the bill: “For greater certainty, the purposes of this act do not include the privatization of publicly owned water, waste water and stormwater services.”

She and I had the opportunity outside this House to discuss that wording, and I initially thought that it was narrower than I wanted. But in fact, having gone through the dictionary and having asked the opinion of a lawyer who's done a fair amount of work in this area, the word “services” refers both to activities and to hard infrastructure. So, in fact, it is a fairly broad coverage of the issue.

The government, in adopting this particular clause, has made it very clear that this bill is not to be used for privatization. Any government, at any level, that attempts to use this bill for privatization of water, waste water or stormwater services will find that, legally, a judge would be able to see very clearly the intent of the government in this clause, and any judge who did not pick it up immediately I'm sure would be reminded by counsel that when they go through the text of the presentations by the government in committee, those here in the chamber, and commentary by the NDP, in fact publicly delivered and owned waste water, stormwater and drinking water systems are not to be privatized. That is a key point and one that can't be overemphasized, because, frankly, the privatization of water systems is not to the advantage of the environment or the economy of this province. I'm very pleased that that clause was inserted at the beginning of the bill and was written in a language that is extremely broad and catches a wide variety of ownership and operation situations.

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Having said all that, this bill claims to stimulate Ontario-based clean water industries by creating municipal demand for clean water technology and by supporting clean water technology development, which, frankly, is not a bad idea. We need a market for clean water technology. We face growing and substantial challenges when it comes to providing ourselves—our society—with clean, potable water.

The bill aims to reduce water use in Ontario. It sets what are called aspirational targets for water conservation—or it doesn't set them: It gives the minister authority to do that, and that, I will touch upon at greater length as we go through this bill. It enables the minister to require municipalities and public agencies to develop water sustainability plans and prescribe changes to plans if targets are not met. It revises the building code to include water conservation. It enables prescription of water efficiency standards for appliances and products. Those are all the stated goals of the bill before us. These are the claims that are made for what this bill will do for society. I use the word “claims” when I talk about this government's bill and when I talk about this government's efforts because, in fact, this Liberal government has underdelivered consistently on environmental bills and initiatives; underdelivered in a way that the people of Ontario should not have to deal with; underdelivers in areas where the people of Ontario deserve fair, energetic treatment.

I'll take a moment to read some excerpts from the testimony of the Canadian Environmental Law Association when it appeared before the committee to hear about this bill. Mr. Joseph Castrilli appeared on behalf of CELA, and in his comments to our standing committee he noted that “the authority to tie water-taking permits to water conservation plans for both the public and private sectors was already contained in 2007 amendments that created section 34.1 of the Ontario Water Resources Act.” In 2007, a few years ago, I was younger and the

world was a newer place. In 2007, there were steps taken to make sure that we had these standards. "However," says Mr. Castrilli, "as members of the committee are aware, section 34.1 is still not in force." It is 2010. We went through that debate. We went through that review of legislation in 2007. "Bill 72"—the one we're debating today—"would authorize the province to require municipalities, by regulation, to prepare water conservation plans as part of their water sustainability plans, the latter also required by this bill. The province, in my respectful submission"—and he was quite respectful—"needs to explain how and when it will integrate the requirements of section 34.1 of the Ontario Water Resources Act with Bill 72 proposals and bring them both into force."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association has done us a great service. They pointed out that strides have been taken in the past. Claims have been put forth on the public record. Voters have been told, "We are standing up for the environment and for water." But in 2010, a number of years later, those initiatives that were so boldly proclaimed such a long time ago are not enforced. One has to ask: What is the fate of this bill? Will it be passed and then be allowed to clutter up some deputy minister's office? Will it fill up a hard drive somewhere, requiring people to delete other files so they can make room for yet another range of promises? I don't know the answer to that. But I do know that if, in fact, action was taken—if legislation was put forward in 2007 and not brought into service and not brought into effect even by now, then one has to assume that we're not going at rocket speed to deal with our water conservation problems.

Mr. Castrilli had a few other comments. I won't read them all, although, frankly, I thought he made a very good submission.

He focused briefly on the question of intra-basin transfers. What that means is that if you have a municipality somewhere between Lake Huron and Lake Erie, you can take water out of Lake Huron and discharge the waste water into Lake Huron. It's an intra-basin transfer; it's within the Great Lakes basin. The problem with that is that the more water you move out of an area, the less is available to provide the environmental support that is needed for the other parts of the Great Lakes. When you do that, you say to a municipality, "You don't really need to conserve a lot. What you need is a very big pipe and some very powerful pumps."

That failure to act is of great consequence to this bill. Will we in fact move ahead substantially and change the amount of water we consume, or will we have a very small act, a very small initiative, that will result in a few toilets being manufactured and a few faucets produced but not the reduction in water consumption that we actually need to engage in?

In the fact sheets that were provided in the briefing book that we were given—the MPPs who went to debate this bill in committee—there are a number of fact sheets about water consumption. In the UK and in Germany, the average use of water per person per day is half of what it is in Ontario. I've had the great good fortune to go to

both of those places. People seem to be well washed. They drink tap water regularly. They are able to clean their homes. Yet they have in place a goal that we would aspire to have, and that's cutting water consumption per person per day in half.

One of the things that surprises me about this bill, or rather, this larger initiative within which the bill should be simply a piece, is that we in fact don't have a target, a goal. When you want to do something—let's say you want to cut the money that is given to children and youth services—you set a target, right? Then you cut. That is not a good thing, but that is a standard measurement practice.

When you want to do something good, it shouldn't simply be a statement of an expression. One should have a larger plan within which this bill nestles as a tool, something that allows one to achieve that larger plan. That's missing, and that's of great concern to me and should be of great concern to anyone who wants to ensure that we in Ontario have good, clean drinking water available on demand when we need it. That's a significant piece and a concern that I have with the way this whole project is being approached.

I want to note other elements—the government's failure to deliver what the people of Ontario need environmentally—so that everyone who observes the passage of this bill, who observes the debate on this bill, understands the track record of this government of actually delivering or not delivering on the things that are vital to the long-term viability of this society and this economy.

According to the Environmental Commissioner's report last December, the current actions of this government fall 30% short of achieving the greenhouse gas reductions that were promised for 2014 and 45% short of the greenhouse gas reductions promised by 2020.

Speaker, you get to sit in on a lot of debates, and you have, obviously, a great deal of patience and fortitude. You may well have heard me speak about this before—I don't know—but you're very discreet, and I appreciate that.

I had the opportunity in 2007 to attend the press conference given by the Premier on this matter, when he talked, in not quite Biblical terms but pretty substantial terms, about the need to move on this issue and to make sure that we protected the future for our children and our grandchildren. He used language that was emotionally powerful, he set out the scale of the problem in a way that no one could misunderstand and he made a commitment to move this province forward so that we would deal with this vital problem.

What do we find? That the government's own plan admits it won't meet the weak targets that were set, and yet very little is done to actually move us to where we need to be.

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I say to those who are watching this debate, I say to those who are listening to this debate, if you can't move forward on something that you think is so fundamentally important to the future of this province, what hope is

there for a little water bill that you pass in the run-up to an election? What hope is there?

In this province, climate change is going to substantially affect the quality and quantity of water available to the people of Ontario. It will cause drought, and there will be farming areas where that drought will be of consequence in terms of crops produced. It will be of consequence in terms of the livelihood that people can make for themselves. It will be of consequence to our economic future, and yet this government does not even act to meet its own goals. If in fact at the much higher level we aren't making sure that our water supply in the natural world is protected, what hope is there for this bill?

When the Environmental Commissioner talked about the failures of the McGuinty government to meet its climate change targets, he made it very clear that action was needed to reduce emissions from transportation. He understood the consequences of not acting, the consequences in terms of infrastructure in our daily lives and the impact on the price of food.

Now, anyone in this chamber who works in the agricultural sector, who represents a riding with an agricultural sector, knows that it's critical to have the right amount of water at the right time. Too much—if you're talking about plowing and seeding, you can't do it. Too little, and it doesn't matter what you grow, you're not going to have a crop.

The Environmental Commissioner noted that one of the areas where in fact action wasn't taking place, where this government was falling down was in dealing with transportation. The government's response to not actually delivering the goods on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation was to cut \$4 billion from the Transit City project, to truncate that project. That will lead to delay and cancellation of long-awaited transit lines in the GTA. Truncating of a project that is badly needed to reduce congestion, smog, greenhouse gas emissions—this city and this province are poorer because of that decision.

This government is failing to stem urban sprawl. When I arrived in this chamber in 2006, we were debating the greater Golden Horseshoe smart growth plan. The plan that initially had been introduced was very extensive and had the aim of increasing the density in urban areas, reducing sprawl and reducing the spillover of urban development into greenfields.

The simple reality was that that bill, step by step, page by page, clause by clause, was pruned back until when it was finally introduced for third reading—commentators like the Pembina Institute and the Neptis Foundation, who had provided background information on the original bill, said simply that it was not clear that this bill would do any different than business-as-usual growth, business-as-usual sprawl, business-as-usual emissions and congestion. This government did not take the advice of those who understood what had to be done to deal with sprawl. Instead, it continues with highway expansion plans, continues with measures to get around the whole Places to Grow Act, and I cite the ministerial zoning

order for Bradford-West Gwillimbury. This government, understanding the consequences of inaction, having studied the issue to the point where it was able to present detailed legislation, still was not willing to act and do what was necessary.

When a problem as severe and as obvious as the sprawl in the GTA stares you in the face, when a problem as obvious as people sitting locked in traffic on the Don Valley, the QEW, the 401—take your pick. When a problem that obvious is not addressed by a government, what hope is there for this bill to conserve water? When it is that obvious, such that there is an anger in suburban GTA about the impasse that people face, what hope is there for this bill to deliver what has to be delivered?

You, Speaker, are well aware of the need to deal with transit, train service, and the need to have clean train service—electric trains—on the service that goes through a number of ridings in the west end and the northwest end of this region. But this government is not acting on what many people say is critical, and that is taking the very critical first big step to make sure that those trains are electric trains, not diesel trains. This government is continuing to allow sprawl to dominate southern Ontario, and it is committed to diesel trains when those diesel trains will lock us into a technology for the next 40 or 50 years that we need to get out of. What hope, when things are so clear, is there for substantial reduction in water consumption in Ontario?

Let's not forget that this government in the past has trumpeted its ability to take on the recycling issue, the waste management issue. This past summer it became clear that the government's waste reduction programs, the imposition of the new eco fees on the public, were not achieving the aims that were originally set out and, in fact, didn't do what people expected would happen: Industry responsible for creating hazardous waste would assume the cost and responsibility for dealing with those things. That's what needed to happen. Industry that was making a fortune from selling toxic products needed in fact to be held responsible for paying for disposal of those products.

What happened, and I'm sure you are well aware, is that the government allowed industry to pass those costs on to the public, creating a huge outcry. That is not atypical of this government's behaviour. We will have an opportunity to get into that when we talk about the next bill that is scheduled for this afternoon.

I'll note that the Toronto Star reported, "Ontario's high-profile electronic waste disposal program is failing to recycle millions of computers and televisions it promised to keep out of landfills." That's pretty instructive. You make a commitment to a big program and, in fact, even though you collect funds, it doesn't divert the waste that needs to be diverted. That's a high-profile program. We deal with millions of electronic objects in this society. Cellphones, iPods, computers, televisions—it goes on and on and on. It is of consequence to us that we are able to acquire them after they've been worn out, to concentrate them, recycle them and make sure that we

don't have toxic metals and toxic chemicals going into our landfill and water tables.

The Toronto Star reported, "In its first year, the Ontario Electronic Stewardship—a private agency created by provincial regulation—gathered only a third of the 42,000 tonnes of toxin-laced equipment it was originally supposed to collect, according to reports obtained by the Star."

Then-Environment Minister John Gerretsen wanted to know why.

"I have been disappointed that OES'—the Ontario Electronic Stewardship—'haven't been able to meet the targets,' Gerretsen said in an interview.

"I don't know what has gone wrong."

This was a mystery to the minister. It was beyond his knowledge, perhaps beyond the knowledge of most mortals; certainly beyond the knowledge of that mortal.

I want to say to you that the fine details of what happened may not be known to the minister or myself or to you, but we shouldn't find it that mystifying that when private industry is allowed to regulate itself, then things are not going to go according to the rosy plan that was set out by the McGuinty government. Those industries will look after their own interests first and secondarily deal with public policy issues.

No surprise; no mystery. One only has to look at the fundamental dynamics to understand where we will be taken.

1400

The spokesperson for Ontario Electronic Stewardship, the Ontario electronic recycling group, was quoted as blaming the problems on growing pains of a new program. They said, in terms of how it's supposed to work, according to the Star, "Companies or non-profits are designated as 'collectors' to pick up used electronics homeowners toss out by the millions. OES pays collectors up to \$235 a tonne out of 'eco fees' contained in the cost of each new electronic gadget sold (from \$2 to \$26 each). The OES then divides the haul from the collectors among eight approved recyclers, which extract usable components and safely dispose of toxic materials, like mercury or beryllium."

I'm addressing this whole question of failure in recycling because, in the end, the credibility of this water bill is based on whether or not this government has a track record of delivering the goods. In this area of recycling, of meeting its greenhouse gas emission targets, of dealing with transportation, it is not meeting its targets.

Now, that may be why there are no targets in the project before us. The bill allows the minister to set aspirational targets. I have to say that I could set an aspirational target today, and the minister, without benefit of a bill, could stand up and announce an aspirational target anyway. He doesn't need a bill to do that. What we do need is a larger plan within which we can see how one would realistically get to those targets and a bill that would facilitate that. I don't see those targets. I don't see that larger plan. I do see a bill that can be an announceable when the next election is upon us.

The Toronto Star went on talking about this particular problem with electronic recycling. According to the Star, "Canada bans the export of e-waste to developing countries, but Canadian companies are allowed to ship materials to brokers in the U.S.," and the United States "has no rules against transporting materials offshore."

If you saw the film *Manufactured Landscapes* and saw the incredible amount of electronic waste sitting in heaps in China, people working without protection and dealing with lead, cadmium, a variety of toxic metals and materials, that probably gave you pause. It certainly gave me pause, because we now have a much clearer picture of what happens with this industry-driven program. We know where those materials, or many of them, wind up.

That's why my hope for this bill to accomplish what has to be accomplished is so small: because I've followed the history, I've seen the pictures, and they don't give me hope.

In fact, again according to the Star, "The current electronic recycling program in Ontario is a failure," said one of the people familiar with this industry. "It doesn't meet its targets for diversion and environmentally sound recycling. And it provides no incentive for investment into green technology and jobs in the province." A pretty substantial statement.

"The problems came to a head in January when Waste Diversion Ontario filed a rare 'failure to comply' notice against the OES, whose board includes Sony, Hewlett Packard and Best Buy executives. It told OES it had to do a better job of collecting the material and selling consumers on the program."

Critics and others who are concerned about the environment in this province say that the Ontario electronics system "must be more accountable because the public is supporting the program financially." People put in tens of millions of dollars a year to make this program work, and yet, as I've said, the program failed miserably when it did not meet its targets.

The head of the organization said, "It is just our first year." But when you look at other jurisdictions, you find that they do somewhat better. Saskatchewan, in its first year, collected 1.7 kilograms of e-waste per capita, compared to an estimated 1.3 kilograms in Ontario, the largest consumer of electronics in the country.

We have a pretty sophisticated industrial base here in Ontario. We've got people who manufacture; we've got people who process; we have administrators and managers capable of doing an awful lot. Yet our record when dealing with e-waste is substantially weaker than that of Saskatchewan. One has to ask why. Why should we have hope in this bill when we can't, in fact, see the government delivering on the recycling of e-waste?

I don't buy that this is a first-year problem. This is a government that announces grand programs and doesn't follow through on delivery. It happens more frequently than not. It is of consequence to the people of this province, and it certainly is of consequence when it comes to our discussing this bill and whether in fact it will deliver water conservation, whether in fact it will deliver economic development and whether in fact it will address

the changing challenges that we face environmentally and economically in Ontario.

Just to finish up on electronic waste: When it got rolling a year ago, the Ontario Electronic Stewardship system had a target of 42,000 tonnes of material to collect. Only 17,000 tonnes have been collected. That's quite a failure: only slightly more than a third. The target was downgraded to 33,000 tonnes partway through last year, but they still fell short. That is of consequence.

In the end, this is a government that naively trusts industry to run programs in the public interest rather than for their own benefit. That is not a reasonable assumption for a society that has gone through a global banking meltdown, for a society that has seen self-regulation by industry fail in the propane industry. One has to ask whether this government fully understands what goes on in the outside world, outside these four walls, and is willing to act in a way that takes account of that real knowledge.

The consequences are, too frequently, very clear and negative. When we look at the energy issue, this is a government that is ramping up hydro rates for ratepayers, with little to show in terms of reduced usage or emissions. It has no current energy plan, although I understand an electricity plan is forthcoming in the next 48 hours. It's astounding to me, though, that we've gone for the last few years without an electricity plan. We've been making investments—we've been making billion-dollar commitments to facilities—without a plan that has been reviewed, for either environmental consequences or consequences of rates, through the Ontario Energy Board. That's the way this government operates.

When I first came here, in 2006, the electricity supply plan was introduced, and if you will remember, Speaker, it was rushed through. There were no environmental hearings. Things had to happen fast. Ultimately, under the next energy minister, Mr. Smitherman, it was found to be inadequate. It was found to be wanting. It was set aside. That was a few years ago. We were told at the time that a new plan would come forward, dealing with conservation targets and efficiency targets. That didn't happen, although it may well happen within the next 48 hours. We shall see.

This government makes commitments of billions of dollars, commitments that will be of consequence for the remaining lifetime of most of the people who sit in this chamber as legislators and for the big bulk of the lifetime of the pages who are serving here today, decisions that will have consequences for us, our children and our grandchildren, done without an environmental review, done without an economic review, done on an ad hoc basis.

This government makes commitments in the billions of dollars without a coherent plan for dealing with electricity use, electricity production or electricity transmission for decades to come. That's the record of this government when it deals with large-scale infrastructure and environmental issues.

If you can't quite get it right when you're talking about the nervous system of a whole society, when you

ad hoc it on multi-billion-dollar commitments, what hope is there for a little water bill that can actually generate employment, if it was properly delivered, and deal with fundamental problems of supply of water? One has to ask, given this record, what hope?

1410

Two years ago, the government called for new conservation and green energy targets from the Ontario Power Authority. That was two years ago. It has taken two years to, perhaps in the next day or so, give us those numbers.

This past summer, the government cut its solar feed-in tariff at the last minute, when hundreds of Ontarians had put together business plans and submitted proposals based on a particular rate for the electricity that they would be providing. People have made very substantial commitments. They found that they were in trouble. I got calls from rural Ontario, all over Ontario, from people who felt that they had been hung out to dry. This government, instead of giving people the confidence that it could deliver, introduced a major bump in the road. My sense is that a lot of members of this provincial Parliament, not just myself, received phone calls and emails from people in rural and small-town Ontario who had made the decision to go forward and were finding themselves out on a limb.

Ultimately, the government backed off, but only because it was very clear that there was going to be an explosion in rural Ontario over what people saw as their being misled, and I'm being generous, Speaker. I know there's other language that could be used. They saw themselves as being misled. They were profoundly angry. That kind of approach undermines any confidence that this bill will actually deliver what has to be delivered and that it will actually make the difference that Ontario needs to see made.

I think it's a good idea to have a water conservation bill. I think it's a good idea to have a large-scale water conservation program. My argument, and I want to reinforce it, is that I don't see this government actually delivering what has to happen with this bill, just as the legislation they passed in 2007 is still not fully in effect—2007, held over until the 2011 election. It's one of those really late presents. It took a long time to unwrap. Maybe it will be unwrapped for October of next year. That's not yet clear.

This government plunged ahead with a billion dollars and more on the not-so-smart meter program, a program that is hiking consumer hydro costs without showing evidence of reducing consumption or shifting usage. You don't have to go very far with Google to see what the American experience was with those meters. The value of the energy they saved was less than the cost of putting in the meters; thus, meters that were supposed to save people money, save electricity companies money, had to be subsidized by those electricity companies and by the consumers who pay their bills to those electricity companies. That's why consumer groups in the United States opposed them, because they could see they weren't

actually delivering reductions in energy consumption; they were adding to people's electricity bills.

Conservation and efficiency is the cheapest thing you can do in terms of providing supply, whether it's for water or electricity. Not-so-smart meters don't meet that test, and yet this government has gone ahead with them. Instead of putting billions into people's homes to allow them to cut their electricity bills or cut their water bills, which would have been very, very useful, we put in meters that will make their lives more difficult and that will, in the end, not deliver the efficiency and conservation that Ontario needs to make sure its electricity system works well.

This government, in this bill, claiming to be so advanced environmentally, is still committed to substantial construction of nuclear power plants in Ontario, construction that I don't believe we can afford; construction that will divert funds away from conservation, renewable power and efficiency; construction that will undermine the competitiveness of this province in the decades to come. That's where this government is at in the whole area of efficiency in environment and in energy.

What hope is there that a government that has difficulty making the right choices when it comes to a system as critical as our electricity system is actually going to deliver what has to happen with this water bill?

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has said that this province, this Liberal government, doesn't even have a comprehensive plan for efficiency in conservation. He made a number of very instructive recommendations as to how Ontario should actually be dealing with efficiency and conservation in the electricity field. He recommended "that the secretary of cabinet direct the development of a comprehensive energy conservation strategy encompassing all major energy sources used in Ontario. The strategy should be developed with public input." Pretty reasonable; I don't see why anyone would quibble with that. I don't see why any government wouldn't implement that. I think that's instructive for the bill we're dealing with today, because this bill talks about accelerating water conservation technology but, as I've said, it doesn't put forward any targets for the amount of water consumption we'll be reducing. We haven't figured it out on the energy side of the equation, and we're repeating the mistakes that were made on that side of the equation.

The Environmental Commissioner's recommendations around conservation are very practical. If we need a comprehensive energy conservation strategy, we certainly need a comprehensive water conservation strategy. Why has this government not learned from the mistakes it's made in the energy field? Do they simply think that they didn't make a mistake and that's the way things should be operating, that they want to make sure things are vague and they want to make sure things are narrow so that they don't have to deal either with having their performance assessed or coming into conflict with those interests that want to have a high level of consumption? That's not clear, but to have ignored the Environmental

Commissioner and what he said about energy when this bill was written is a huge error.

The Environmental Commissioner recommends further that we need to "stabilize electricity policy, and provide clarity and certainty to that policy." The Environmental Commissioner recommended that the Ministry of Energy—the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure at the time—"move quickly to clarify the role of the integrated power system plan and to finalize the key conservation regulations and directives under the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009." He's right. He's right in that field, and he would be right if his commentary was applied to water.

There's no question that electricity is critical to the functioning of a society. So is water. Shut down electricity in this town and it shuts down very fast. Shut down water in this province, and within hours you would have very substantial disruptions. I think that's a gross understatement. We don't have a comprehensive water plan for this province, and this bill isn't going to introduce it.

The Environmental Commissioner, with regard to efficiency and conservation in the energy field, said that we needed to examine the role of benchmarking and energy targets. The Environmental Commissioner recommends "that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure establish targets to reduce provincial electricity consumption. These consumption targets will supplement the province's existing targets to reduce peak electricity demand and fulfill the government's commitment to build a culture of conservation." Yeah. With no offence to the Environmental Commissioner, you don't have to be a genius to make that recommendation. Yes, you need to set targets; there are none for water. They need to be clear. They need to give you a framework within which you're going to act.

In the course of preparing to speak today, I came across a notation that California's target is to reduce water consumption by 20%. Well, there's no mention in the documentation we've been provided with as to how much we plan to reduce water consumption in Ontario, but certainly it would be helpful, in assessing whether or not this bill was useful, if we had a target that people could measure its viability against. The McGuinty government should have learned from its experience with energy how in fact it needs to approach the water issue and should have incorporated that into the documentation before us.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, talking about energy, "recommends that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure establish reportable benchmarking by sector. This would assist the government in deciding whether to establish targets to reduce the use of natural gas, oil, propane and transportation fuels, and would make the targets meaningful."

In fact, with a small amount of translation, that applies entirely to what we're talking about today, because there are different sectors using different amounts of water in different ways. There's the industrial sector. There's the

resource processing sector. There's the food processing sector. There's the industrial/commercial sector. There's residential. There are different areas with different potentials and different levels of consumption.

Again, this bill and the documentation that comes with the bill do not address what those targets need to be and do not talk about the sectoral needs of this province, again reflecting the fact that this bill is vague and, at the same time, narrow. It only talks about a small part of water consumption, and even then, within that reality, it is vague.

1420

The Environmental Commissioner, talking about conservation and efficiency in the electricity sector, "recommends that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure develop a reporting mechanism to track progress on directives which ensures accountability and transparency."

It makes sense to me. Why not? How do you know that you've done what you set out to do if you don't have reporting mechanisms? How can you hold a government accountable? How can the people know whether they're delivering what they said they'd deliver, unless there are reporting mechanisms that people can understand quickly and clearly?

It makes sense that people would be able to track whether or not this bill, if adopted, was actually implemented along the lines that those who put it forward claimed it would perform. That would be really useful. I don't see that here. That's something that should be taken from the energy sector, from the Environmental Commissioner's recommendations on that sector, and put in place so that people can actually judge whether or not the government is delivering on what it says it's going to deliver on.

Right now, it doesn't have to deliver much of anything, other than trying to get the bill passed, to say in an election leaflet coming soon to a home near you, "We have a plan." That may be the full and total function of this particular bill.

I've talked about this government's record when it comes to climate change, when it comes to energy and when it comes to dealing with waste. In all of these areas there are substantial failings, and the nature of those failings says to us that it is legitimate to have real concerns about whether or not this bill will deliver what needs to be delivered.

I'm going to go on to another section, but before I do that, I just can't resist because there was a really fascinating piece—and I guess you have to be a politician to call this a fascinating piece. But in the Environmental Commissioner's report, Rethinking Energy Conservation in Ontario, he talked about a groundbreaking piece of legislation brought forward by this government a number of years ago.

With similar fanfare to the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, the government passed the Energy Conservation Leadership Act in 2006. It was a big deal. It was a big conservation act. Jobs were promised. I'm sure

the millennium was promised. Light shone on this Legislature; clouds parted in the sky. The Energy Conservation Leadership Act had many of the same enabling provisions as the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, including the ability to require public agencies to develop conservation plans and consider conservation and procurement and capital investment—much like the bill before us today. A surprising coincidence? A surprising similarity? Are these twins separated at birth? I don't know, but very similar acts—the ability to override restrictions on the use of conservation technologies and even the power to require home energy information upon property sales. Yet in the three years between the passage of the ECLA, the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, and its replacement by the Green Energy Act, the only action taken by the government was one minor regulation that overrode barriers to the use of clotheslines. While laudable in principle and ambitious in scope, the conservation leadership act had minimal influence on energy conservation in Ontario.

Now, I have to say, the Environmental Commissioner has a sense of humour because there's a very jaunty picture of some laundry hanging out on a line in his report. Three years after grand announcements, after, I'm sure, very, very heartfelt speeches about the need to protect the environment, the only thing that was done with that act was to make sure that clotheslines were legal again in Ontario. That does not encourage me. It does not give me hope for the success of this bill. The past as a predictor of the future is not a really happy, bright or cheery thing.

I want to talk about some of the realities of water in Ontario, and I want to raise a point that was put forward by my colleague from Kenora—Rainy River. He noted the failure of this government to protect the quality of water. The Toronto Star reported in 2008 that the Canadian Medical Association Journal noted that Ontario had 679 boil-water alerts between 2006 and 2008, the most in any province. So I think the simple reality is that, from time to time, water systems will fail, and if people are alert, monitoring and taking action to ensure the public is protected, we shouldn't be totally surprised. But for us to have more boil-water alerts than any other province is noteworthy.

The Star went on to report: "Hundreds of 'boil water' advisories have been issued in Ontario in the past two years, placing communities on high alert for tainted drinking water, the Canadian Medical Association Journal reports."

"In a story published yesterday, the CMAJ reported that since 2006"—in 2006, Dalton McGuinty was Premier, just so that it's on the record and there's no confusion as to under whose watch things happened—"Ontario had 679 such alerts—warnings by public health departments telling residents they cannot ensure the safety of their drinking water without boiling it first."

"But outside experts say there are many reasons why such advisories are issued, ranging from the bureaucratic, such as incomplete water sampling, to the systemic, such

as problems in the water treatment plant process, to active health risks, such as toxic contamination.”

It went on to say: “Without an analysis of the reasons for each advisory, it is not clear that water is putting people at risk, said University of Toronto professor Ron Hofmann, who specializes in drinking-water engineering....

“The CMAJ reported nationwide figures for boil-water advisories, with Ontario, the most populous province, in the lead with 679 ... followed by British Columbia with 530 and Newfoundland with 228. The CMAJ reported there were 1,766 boil-water advisories in place as of March 31, 2008,” in Canada.

Now, boil-water advisories are not in place everywhere. They tend to be focused on the most disadvantaged communities in this province. First Nations communities are the hardest hit. Eight of the 21 First Nations communities listed on Health Canada as having high-risk drinking water systems and drinking water advisories in effect are in Ontario. That’s substantial for a province that went through Walkerton, understands the consequences of failing to deal with contaminated water, has made very visible and public commentary about the need to deal with it, and still, eight of 21 of the First Nations communities listed as having high-risk drinking water systems are here in Ontario.

Former Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen says that First Nations issues were among his concerns when drafting this Water Opportunities Act: “It would not be right for Ontario to export our tremendous [water treatment] technology without first making sure that our people, including First Nations, have the best protection when it comes to the quality of their water.”

Frankly, I think he’s right. I think it’s going to be hard to sell technology abroad when people know that there are ongoing problems with water in communities in this province such that people have to boil water before they can drink it.

Think of yourself being in a sales meeting somewhere in Europe. Someone listening to the pitch from an Ontario company Googles the province and “water contamination” and finds, “Wow. This province that is saying that it has this great technology has all these boil-water advisories. Let’s think again about that.”

That has consequence for the people who are affected by the water systems that are failing and it has consequence for our reputation to actually sell products in the wider world. We should be making the decision to have clean water based on the first alone, but I throw in the second because for some people it’s the question of marketability that will be more of a determinant. We should not be in a position where people regularly have to deal with contaminated water systems.

Chief Bryan LaForme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, in April: “Walkerton had an effect in mainstream Ontario, but not in First Nations.” Twenty-five per cent of his southern Ontario community does not have access to clean drinking water.

Slow implementation of the Clean Water Act passed in 2006 is of consequence to us here today. That act

passed in 2006, but the source water protection plans for watersheds have only started to be developed and won’t be completed until August 2012. That’s six years. This is one of the more significant issues in this province, of consequence to settlement, of consequence to the environment, of consequence to the economy.

1430

I was here for the debate on that act and told about the urgency of forward movement. Now we can see it’s very clear: six years from adoption to actually bring forward the watershed plans. These source water protection plans, which we were rightly told were so urgent to put together in 2006, still await the putting together and still are not complete. There are years to go before that act—part of that act—will be in effect.

What does that mean in terms of this water conservation bill that’s before us today? What it says to me is that potentially, that act, which was passed in the lead up to an election, because there had to be something on an election flyer that said we were taking action on water—this bill before us may well be our 2011 election flyer water act. We will see. I look forward to finding Liberal pamphlets on doorsteps in my riding to see if they talk about this water act. This government has failed to address a variety of critical environmental issues, critical issues when it comes to water.

I think initiatives on water make a lot of sense. This government has a very poor track record of delivering on programs that they have described as critical. We should not hold a huge amount of hope out for what comes forward from this bill, should it be passed. Ontario deserves better than that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I certainly listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks from the member from Toronto–Danforth. In fact, I listened very intently to the nice things he said about me, for which I’d like to thank him.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And they were well meant.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly it was not our intent in any way to have this bill be perceived as a possible way of privatizing the delivery of water, waste water services, in this province. I’m glad that the member has acknowledged that our amendment has ensured that that is clear to all concerned.

The member also talked about our government’s track record, and I’d say to him that I have a few really concrete examples that I’m certainly proud of, and I think they speak directly to our track record. Just last year, we provided an additional \$70 million to upgrade the province’s six remaining primary water treatment plants, meaning every plant is now a secondary treatment plant. Certainly that’s a good thing, a very concrete measure.

He also alluded to the situation on many First Nations reserves, as did his colleague from Timmins–James Bay last week. Although I think it’s very clear that our federal partners are not stepping up to the plate the way they should do, our Ministry of the Environment here in On-

tario has supported aboriginal communities. They've provided engineering and technical advice and are carrying out conformance assessments of First Nations systems upon request; 37 have been done so far. They've provided support to help First Nations communities interested in connecting to a municipal water or waste water system; 10 systems have been connected. And they've been working with First Nations associations and training organizations to increase First Nations water and waste water operator certification levels; there are 132 First Nations operators now certified.

This bill—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Toronto–Danforth, as I said last week, was very well informed on this topic and, I believe, very passionate about many of the things he refers to. Certainly safe, clean drinking water is something that all sides of this House would agree with.

I really take my lead on this particular bill from the work done by the region of Durham. They have a very good report, issued on June 15, 2010. The report is in response to the EBR posting. There remains in here a number of suspicious comments—not suspicious on their side. I'm giving voice to their comments, which are in themselves suspicious of the government's motive here on the Water Opportunities Act. It does imply here that some regions of the province aren't dealing with their water supply appropriately. If you look at section 4.17, pressure on water and sewer user rates, some areas are not providing full-cost recovery in their system of billing.

What this bill does is download additional standards and the costs associated with them, so they're raising the standards by downloading them to the municipalities, who are now going to have to pay for more it. In fact, it mandates that municipalities now are going to have to redo their software and billing system. We've concluded, in a general sense, that this is smart meters for water. This is what we've determined. We've seen the fiasco under smart meters for electricity, how prices have risen and will continue to rise; even the Premier has admitted that. Now we're seeing it for water. You can be assured, as you are listening today, that your water bill is going to go up around 8% to 15% every year under Premier McGuinty's plan. So this is smart meters for water.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do on environmental matters, to my good friend from Toronto–Danforth. He started off his speech by talking about one of the amendments that the Liberal government accepted in committee which I think went a long way to assuage the fears of many of us that this bill was really about privatization.

He went on then to describe the rest of the bill in terms that I think all of us know from reading it, from listening to the discussion. This is a vague and narrow bill. It is not going to do very much about anything. It has a very

narrow frame, a very narrow issue. It's all about looking at how you tinker around the edges, when most people in this province are looking for major reform.

He also talked about the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. I remember that previous environmental debate. I remember all of the huge extrapolations and the people talking about the wonder of how this was going to save the planet. In fact, all that happened, and my friend from Toronto–Danforth correctly points this out, is that the government was able by regulation to make clotheslines legal again in Ontario in those places that were seeing not to make them legal. This is much the same. This bill is going to be exactly the same, and it is a crying shame to me, particularly as it relates to our First Nations communities across this province. Those members of the Legislature who have had an opportunity to go into northern and isolated rural First Nations communities will know that the drinking water is not safe. The poverty is endemic. The people are frustrated. The young people have nothing to do. One of the first things we could do is to attack strongly how we help them with their water supply, to make sure that they're safe in all things.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have just a couple of minutes to respond in part to the member from Toronto–Danforth. I also want to reflect briefly, if I could, on his comments—I was here at the beginning; I missed a little of his hour or so, just at the end—in respect to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I want to say that because I think it's important, when we have that kind of commentary, to reflect on it, that there is a lot of good work that does get done outside of this place, outside of this forum in here. Good work is done here on occasion too, but often the work happens outside. When the debate happens in here, obviously it is government's job to put forward the government position, the opposition's job to challenge that, but it's always good to hear about the cooperative efforts that occur to make legislation better, often in the hall, and the hours that are spent doing that.

This legislation really is about opportunities. I think it's about water opportunities. It's about recognizing that there is a \$400-billion water opportunity globally and that we want to be able to develop the expertise here in Ontario, to export not our water resource but the expertise around water that we can develop here in Ontario. Certainly, it's a framework piece of legislation. It's intended to allow that, among other things, to happen.

1440

Both the member from Durham, who was speaking a moment or so ago about the region of Durham, and I sat on regional council along the way. We're certainly well aware of the good work that some municipalities, including Durham, have been doing. Unfortunately, he digressed into another conversation and didn't have the opportunity—he needed probably 20 minutes to talk about all the good work Durham is doing and not about the other agenda that he wanted to speak to, so I'd be

anxious, if he has the opportunity, to hear more about that as well.

This is a good piece of legislation. It's been well researched, well thought out with the community, and will serve this province well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members for Oak Ridges–Markham, Durham, Beaches–East York, and Pickering–Scarborough East for standing and addressing the issue.

I particularly want to note in my last remaining time how important it is that it has been emphasized in this chamber that this bill cannot be used to privatize public water services, either the hard infrastructure or the service itself. That is a reality that people have to carry forward in their thinking on this. Otherwise, I think in the hour that I spoke I conveyed most of my thoughts. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Wilkinson has moved third reading of Bill 72. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I've just received a deferral slip. It reads,

“To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the third reading vote on Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters, by Minister Wilkinson, be deferred until Tuesday, November 23, 2010.”

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Orders of the day.

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts

d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I will be sharing my time, as I do always, very generously with my colleague the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I thank my colleagues in the House, and of course the government House leader for being so generous in sharing her time with me. I'm pleased to stand in the House today for third reading of the Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010.

I would like to start by highlighting a commitment that this government has made in the 2010 Ontario budget. In that document, we announced our intention to convert the Ontario property tax credit into the Ontario energy and property tax credit in order to deliver more than \$1.2 billion in annual support to low- and middle-income Ontarians. The proposed legislation that we're discussing today not only fulfills that commitment but also includes two significant enhancements to boost support for Ontario families and for seniors.

Just a few weeks ago, in late September, the Premier and the Minister of Finance announced that our government is proposing to enhance the support we originally announced in the 2009 budget by \$70 million. With the proposed enhancement, we would deliver almost \$1.3 billion in annual support to 2.8 million Ontarians to help with the sales tax on energy and on their property taxes.

This bill also proposes to provide additional assistance to seniors. We're proposing to increase the income levels at which the credit begins to be reduced. This means that more seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes, would benefit from the full credit and a greater number of seniors would qualify. With this proposed enhancement, 50,000 more seniors would be eligible for the credit and another 690,000 seniors in the province would receive a higher amount. In total, approximately 740,000 senior families and single seniors would see an increase in tax relief.

Seniors have worked hard to help build this province—the province, of course, that we enjoy today—and with this proposed tax credit, we're making it a little easier for them by putting the money back into their pockets to help with sales tax on their energy and with their property taxes.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit, or the OEPTC, is the latest tax relief we're announcing as part of the Open Ontario plan. The Open Ontario plan is a plan for jobs and a plan for growth that puts the economy on the right track and provides important support for Ontarians and their budgets. We started with tax relief for 93% of Ontario income tax payers on January 1, who get, on average, \$200 back into their wallets. It was a 17% cut on the tax rate on the first \$37,106 of income. That tax cut also took 90,000 lower-income Ontarians off the tax rolls all together.

We've also brought in a series of tax credits. They're harder to see because you usually apply for them on your

tax form, but tax credits are the most effective way to target those who need the help the most. For example, the Ontario sales tax credit is putting up to \$260 per person, including children, back into family budgets this year. For northern families, we've put in place the northern Ontario energy credit, worth up to \$200, to help with higher energy costs in the north. More than 50% of all northerners will benefit from this assistance.

Last month, we introduced legislation to create a children's activity tax credit, which is designed to make enrolling children in sports, arts and other activities just a little more affordable for parents. Broader in scope than the federal children's fitness tax credit, the proposed tax credit would give up to \$50 back per child, or \$100 if the child has a disability, for a very wide range of physical and non-physical activities.

That's not all: In the fall economic statement tabled this past week, we announced the Ontario clean energy benefit, which would give Ontario families, farms and small businesses a 10% benefit on their bills for five years. That would be 10% off electricity bills every month, effective January 1, 2010. This benefit would help over four million residential consumers and more than 400,000 small businesses and farms. For a typical household, this would mean saving about \$150 for 2011; for an average small business, it would be around \$1,700; and about \$2,000 for farms.

We know that electricity bills are rising because of the necessary and unavoidable new investments required to ensure that Ontario has a clean, modern and reliable system. That's why we're taking action through the proposed Ontario clean energy benefit, along with the other initiatives that support Ontario families.

Today, we're here to debate an important piece of legislation, one that would enhance a tax credit to help with the costs of maintaining a home. The Ontario energy and property tax credit would allow almost one million seniors to receive up to \$1,025 per year back in relief for the sales tax on energy and on property tax. This credit would also apply to non-seniors, to a maximum of \$900. In total, 2.8 million Ontarians would be entitled to receive, on average, \$455 a year.

Ontarians would be able to apply for the Ontario energy and property tax credit starting with their 2010 tax returns. The credit for 2011 and later years would be paid out four times a year, just like the new Ontario sales tax credit and the GST credit.

1450

This measure supports recommendations by social policy advocates to send out more frequent payments of property tax credits, rather than lump-sum payments, to improve cash flow to the recipients. In this way, Ontarians are receiving the funds when they need them.

I'd like to expand on how this tax credit would work. To target assistance to those who need it the most, the OEPTC would be income-tested. To provide additional assistance for seniors, we're proposing, as I mentioned, to increase the income level at which the credit begins to be reduced for seniors from those announced in the 2009 budget. The income threshold would be increased to

\$25,000 from \$20,000 for single seniors, and to \$30,000 from \$25,000 for senior couples and single seniors with dependent children. This follows improvements we announced in the 2009 budget, when the non-senior income thresholds were raised from \$4,000 to \$20,000 for single people and to \$25,000 for families, including single parents. For all recipients, the OEPTC would be reduced by 2% of adjusted family net income over the applicable income thresholds, which would be indexed annually for inflation. Non-seniors, including a family or single person who owns or rents a home, would be able to claim an amount for sales tax on energy up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$50 plus 10% on their occupancy costs, to a maximum of \$700. This means that non-seniors would be able to receive up to \$900 in support every year.

A senior family or a single senior who owns or rents a home could claim an amount on sales tax on energy up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$425 plus 10% of their occupancy costs, to a maximum of \$825, for a maximum of \$1,025 per year, as I mentioned earlier. Ontarians who do not pay property tax or rent but still pay for home energy, such as individuals who live on a reserve or in a public long-term-care home, would still be eligible for tax relief through the energy component of the proposed OEPTC.

Our government has been firmly committed to introducing innovative new programs that create measurable improvements in people's lives right here in Ontario. Over the past seven years, these investments have raised the quality of life of the people of Ontario, and are helping our economy and our families adapt to sweeping global changes. One of our priorities has been supporting programs that help Ontario seniors live safe, active and healthy lives. These programs include introducing the seniors' homeowner property tax grant to provide eligible senior homeowners with assistance with their property taxes. Over the next five years, we will be providing an additional \$1 billion through this grant, benefiting more than 600,000 seniors with low to middle incomes who own their own homes. Furthermore, our four-year \$1.1-billion aging at home strategy will provide support to seniors and their caregivers to help seniors stay healthy and live with dignity and independence in the comfort of their own homes. We've also expanded home care services to about 500,000 people in Ontario each year, and introduced legislative protections for Ontario seniors living in retirement homes under the new Retirement Homes Act.

Our government has also taken important steps to ensure seniors who cannot live at home enjoy access to the highest-quality long-term-care services by making key investments in long-term-care homes and increasing front-line staff. There are various measures we've taken for pension reform and retirement income adequacy, which are key priorities for the McGuinty government. Ontario is playing a lead role in a national effort to review the state of the current retirement income system, its future sustainability and options that could strengthen the system for our seniors. Our government is also

engaged in modernizing the Pension Benefits Act, making the first major enhancement to our province's pension system in more than 20 years and introducing the second step of reforms just a few weeks ago.

The McGuinty government is supporting seniors through reforms to the rules for locked-in retirement savings accounts, giving seniors and other Ontarians more flexibility in accessing funds in these accounts.

We're making investments that help provide seniors with more opportunities to stay active, healthy and involved in their communities. This includes investing more than \$1.2 million to expand our elderly persons' centres program, which supports seniors' centres across the province, and \$4.2 million invested in elder abuse prevention, including providing \$900,000 annually to the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse to better assist victims in communities across this province.

As you see, our government continues to work hard to ensure that Ontario seniors have access to quality programs and quality services that enable them to live healthy, safe, active, independent lives.

The global economic downturn, however, has created several challenges for Ontario families, and the McGuinty government is making investments to ensure that Ontario families are supported, especially during these tough economic times.

We're investing in seniors and we're investing in youth. Our full-day kindergarten provides kids with the foundation they need for future learning, supporting student achievement and building on success that we've already seen in the primary class sizes and in increasing graduation rates.

We're helping Ontario families and helping working parents to continue to have access to quality child care while playing an active role in the labour force at the same time. Of course, it's disheartening that the federal government has declined to ensure stability in the child care sector, but our government has chosen to step in with an investment of \$63.5 million a year to permanently fill the gap and preserve approximately 8,500 child care spaces. This brings Ontario's annual investment in child care to approximately \$860 million. This also helps build a stronger economy by making it easier for parents to leave social assistance for employment.

Under the OCB, families continue to receive children's benefits, regardless of the source of their income. The government remains committed to a maximum annual OCB of \$1,310 per child by 2013, as announced in the Ontario poverty reduction strategy.

These are just a few examples of how the McGuinty government is investing in Ontario's families, because we believe that by continuing to make investments in our families, we will ensure Ontario's success for generations to come.

The proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit is just the latest example of investments our government is making to support Ontario families and Ontario seniors. These are investments we're making to support the very foundation of our Open Ontario plan, which is Ontario's people.

Furthermore, the OEPTC is one part of our larger, comprehensive tax reform plan, which provides significant tax cuts and relief for Ontario families and for individuals. Through our Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth and other measures announced since the 2009 budget, we would deliver \$12 billion in permanent and temporary tax relief over three years to Ontario families and individuals. This tax relief, as well as our Open Ontario plan for economic development, and new investments are helping Ontarians by putting money back into their pockets, ensuring they have access to good jobs now and in the future.

The proposed OEPTC is another step we're taking to support Ontario families. It supports our 2010 budget commitment to help Ontarians with home energy costs and property tax costs.

I wanted to take a moment before I conclude to quote Susan Eng from CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, and her presentation that she made on November 4. Susan Eng has this to say: "CARP members will be very pleased that the Ontario government has responded to their call for relief. The targeted relief for lower-income seniors and moving to include a higher income bracket as well will be welcome news, and directs the relief where it's most needed but without leaving out modest-income seniors."

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I'd like to conclude by re-emphasizing the important fact that the proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit would provide almost \$1.3 billion in annual support to 2.8 million people in Ontario. That is why I ask for the support of the House in passing this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Robert Bailey): Questions or comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am really pleased to just offer a few comments on this Bill 109, because it really is just another example of the sort of fun with figures that this government is constantly playing.

Here we have a situation where we had a property tax credit that is now being revoked with this. It was going to go up to \$900 per year and now it's being changed into the property tax and energy credit, but it's still the same money we're talking about here. There's no more money that's being offered, no more of a credit, because now what's going to happen is that the property tax component part is going to be capped at \$700 rather than \$900, and now there is a \$200 credit that's going to be available as an energy credit.

It's just sort of creative accounting that we see consistently, as we're about to see with yet another bill that's coming forward that is going to allow people a 10% rebate on their energy bills—but we're going to have to borrow a billion dollars in order to be able to pay for it.

Quite frankly, in my view, that's simply not responsible because this is more long-term debt that we're going to be saddling our children and grandchildren with. We need to really come to grips with this, but it's all a direct result of the disastrous energy policies and lack of a long-term comprehensive plan for energy in the

province of Ontario that this government has miserably failed to address.

By having a policy that is heavily loaded in favour of green renewable energy—of course we want to do that, but the fact of the matter is that's not going to keep all the lights on for residential consumers in Ontario at the present time, nor is it going to be able to allow us to attract the kinds of businesses we want to have here in Ontario to replace the many manufacturing jobs that were lost during the recession. We need to do whatever we can to encourage businesses to come to Ontario. We need to come to grips with our energy plan.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my friend as she was doing the one-hour leadoff. I had expected to hear a great deal more, as she was waxing so eloquently as to how this government is doing such amazing things to help seniors and the poor and children across this province in the wake of energy bills that are spiralling out of control.

I listened to her as she quite carefully and methodically listed off all the little, tiny programs that are being put in place to try to assuage all of those hurtful things that are happening to families and seniors as a result of the HST and skyrocketing hydro and energy rates.

I listened to her with great interest. I was saddened, though, I must say, when she sat down after some 17 minutes. I know that everything she said made sense, but I would have thought that there was so much more that she needed to say to defend her government in terms of what seems to be happening every day in this place and in all the editorial contents in newspapers across this great province as they descend, oh, so strongly against this government and its policies.

But I thank her for having one of those rare epiphany moments where she stands up for a government when hardly anyone else will do it. In that, she did her fellow members so very proud, and I think it shows a great deal of courage on her part to say what she said and how she said it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's always a great delight to listen to my colleague the exceptional member from Kitchener-Conestoga, who had a great deal of experience in the education sector before she came here to Queen's Park in 2007. We certainly know that she does spend an incredible amount of time with various seniors' organizations in the wonderful area of Kitchener-Conestoga, which I believe includes the wonderful community of Elmira, the home of the great Mennonite population here in Ontario.

She certainly went into the details on the ability to help and provide an energy and property tax credit for seniors and families in the province of Ontario: to help those hard-working families that we know go out each and every day to do their best to move Ontario's yardsticks forward; and our seniors in this wonderful prov-

ince, who have provided the great environment which we all enjoy.

It's interesting. I compared my own energy bill in Peterborough from October 2009 to October 2010. I have a smart meter; I've had one with a load-limiter in place for the last two years. I have my bills right here. And year over year, October to October, my energy costs have gone up exactly \$8.50. If any member wants to take a look at the profile of my bill in Peterborough, I would gladly show them. We've had a smart meter with a load-limiter in place for the last two years. We get our electricity from Peterborough Utilities, which is owned by the city of Peterborough. They provide a dividend of some \$5 million each and every year to the city of Peterborough. I'd be prepared to share that. I think it's time that we really called into question some of these exaggerated statements we've heard in the House about energy costs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to comment on the speech by the member from Conestoga. Look, the government can put a lot of spin on all these sort of—I call them rescue-piece types of legislation. However, I talk to people on the street, I talk to people at seniors' events and Santa Claus parades. They just had a big one yesterday in Orillia. I can tell you that people are so disillusioned with this government's energy file that they have no confidence in whatever they're doing. I just did an interview with a radio station back home. They're trying to figure out what they're actually up to, because every week they come out with something, but at the same time people—the radio announcer said, "I've got my own bill. All the other things that are on the bill with the consumption is more money than the actual consumption now." It's higher and higher than ever.

I think it's easy for the government to bring out this legislation and the messaging they use around it, but they're not fooling the people of Ontario; I think the polling shows that. I think the general population feels that this government has, not only on the energy file but with the harmonized sales tax, with some of the health care issues, with issues around the economy, the deficit etc.—I think that people are on to this government. It's very unfortunate that the government continues down this path, thinking that they're going to try to—certain words you can't use in this House, but the reality is that people have caught on to a government that's basically worn out and tired. The people in Ontario want change. They want positive change, and they're looking for platforms from other parties. We hope the platform that our party will come out with will be something that will be very positive to the citizens of Ontario, include transparency and, more importantly, have respect for the taxpayers' dollars in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Kitchener-Conestoga has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to respond and to acknowledge the members from Whitby-Oshawa,

Beaches—East York, Peterborough and Simcoe North for their comments.

The member from Beaches—East York—I have to respond because he talked about my eloquence; how can you let that go? Thank you. Of course, I listened intently to him as well. He did listen intently too; he turned his chair around and stared right at me and listened very intently. I know that he heard me talk about this OEPTC, the proposed enhancements, how 50,000 more seniors will be eligible for the credit. I know he heard me say that another 690,000 seniors will receive a higher amount, and I know he heard me say that a total of approximately 740,00 senior families and single seniors would see tax relief. Look, I think we can all agree that seniors have worked hard to build this province, a province that we all enjoy today. Certainly, with this proposed tax credit, we're making it a little bit easier for them by putting the money back into their pockets to help them with their sales tax relief on their energy and their property taxes.

1510

The epiphany, of course, that the member from Beaches—East York referred to—I love that word. That is one of my favourite words. You don't have to listen to my epiphany. I want to share with you the epiphany of members from my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, who had this to say: Cyril Ridout, who is the board chair for Community Care Concepts, which serves all three townships of Woolwich, Wellesley and Wilmot, and Meals on Wheels, and who goes into the homes of seniors, says, "As a member of the Community Care Concepts board and a volunteer driver for patients and Meals on Wheels, I'm aware of the needs of many seniors who are on fixed incomes. I know that they will welcome your announcement" of this OEPTC. "It may well be the difference that will allow them to remain comfortably in their own home."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to third reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments. I'm going to speak for a few minutes, but I know that the member from Durham has a lot to say on this bill, so I will share my time with the member from Durham.

I have spoken at length to this bill on second reading, so I won't repeat myself and go over everything I've already said. We supported the bill on second reading and we plan to support it again on third reading, but we certainly believe that this bill was more about politics than anything else. Ontario families are facing huge increases in their energy bills, and it seems like every week there's another tax credit that comes down the pipe from this government as they try to curry favour with the people of the province.

But, as has been pointed out, there was an existing property tax credit of \$900, and they've kind of rejigged

it a bit and expanded some of the threshold so that more people can access it. It's interesting. The old tax credit was \$900; they reduced it to \$700 and then added a \$200 energy component to bring it back up to \$900, although more people can access that \$200 energy component, so the total cost of the actual tax credit is \$70 million. That, when you spread it out across the province, is a relatively small tax credit for the people of the province.

I would have to ask, what's the motive behind this? I'd say it's more about politics than anything else. The government, as has been mentioned, is not looking that great in the polls. Energy bills are a huge concern to the people of the province, and so we're seeing various initiatives to lessen the burden a little bit.

This is a letter from a constituent of mine which kind of demonstrates the way people are feeling out there. This one is mainly connected with energy:

"Dear Mr. Miller

"Thank you for responding to me.

"Basically I am pissed off with the HST.

"In my letter I listed a few things I pay more and more. Another thing I can add is my water heater rental. Hydro is my main heat source. Nursing licences are subject to HST. I need them to work.

"To simplify, the HST is a smokescreen to a PST hike; adding new products and services as I have previously listed. This tax grab by the Liberals will certainly add revenue to pay for misspending of tax dollars—notably eHealth...." You would think that I wrote this or the opposition wrote this, but this is from a constituent in my riding, a constituent in Huntsville.

"As for health care the LHINs eat up tax dollars for overpaid managers. Lack of dollars get to front-line workers, mostly for patients. I see bed cuts and nursing layoffs mostly because new nurses are losing faith in secure health care jobs."

I'm going on: "How convenient: the HST a year before he is elected. Take a year to get revenue and then spend it next year at election time.

"The HST is bad because PST is being added to services and products never taxed before. Wastage and false hopes occur. In health care, for example, OPSEU reports \$1 million is wasted on consultants. In power, false hopes to generate power with wind or solar when the technology is not a sure thing.

"I hope you can pressure the Liberals to stop this mess. I am nervous because revenue is being taken from me and added to taxes when I see no return in services."

That's from a nurse in Huntsville who wrote me that letter. I used that just as a good example of what you do, as the member from Simcoe North said, when you go to various events around your riding. That's the kind of thing that you hear from people. I think that unless the government members have earmuffs on as they go around their riding, they're probably hearing it too, which I think is why the government, in panic mode, is responding with a number of bills that it hopes will curry favour with the government.

We had the fall economic statement last week, and in the fall economic statement they talked about the fact that

they're introducing a bill to bring about a 10% reduction in energy costs. But as you look further in the fall economic statement, you also see that they're predicting a 46% increase in energy prices in the next five years—a 46% increase. We've already had substantial increases on energy bills with—I think most recently the Ontario Energy Board approved a 10% increase. There's HST of 8%. There's money for the backdoor energy audits. On the bill, there's the costs of smart meters and then there's time-of-use billing. You add all of that up and that's a pretty substantial increase. Then, in their fall economic statement delivered last Thursday, they're predicting another 46% increase in hydro bills. So, great, they're going to give us 10% and a small tax credit here in this bill to people, but we're seeing just a huge increase. So it's give a little back with one hand and take a whole bunch with the other.

The other interesting thing about last week's fall economic statement was that when we look at why we're having this 46% increase predicted to come about in the next five years, 56% of the increase is attributed to the McGuinty government green energy experiments. I call them the "buy high, sell low" plan, where they buy rooftop solar for 80 cents a kilowatt hour when the market price for electricity is around five, six, seven cents a kilowatt hour. The cost of that gets spread amongst all the ratepayers. We all end up paying eventually, and that's why we're seeing that hydro bills are going to go up 46% and that 56% of that is attributable to the green energy experiments of this government.

You even look at—you know, they're giving 10% back, but how are they paying for it? The government has increased spending dramatically the last number of years, over 70% since they came into power. The budget was about \$70 billion; they're now spending, this year, \$126 billion, taking in record revenues of \$107 billion, but spending substantially above that. We had almost a \$20-billion deficit; it's somewhere around \$19 billion this year. They don't have the money to actually give this 10% reduction in hydro rates, so they're going to borrow it. They're going to add another \$1.1 billion per year, over five years, to pay for this 10% reduction.

Who pays for this? Guess what? We all pay for it, with interest. Sure, they're going to give it back on your hydro bill, but then you're going to pay with future taxes—and our kids and their kids are going to end up paying—for this \$1-billion, 10% reduction in future taxes. The problem with this government is that they just haven't shown any real restraint, so they continue to spend and spend and spend, and as a result, they've been giving away irresponsible settlements, despite having this \$20-billion deficit. There's a big, deep hole, and now they're panicking and coming out with various different bills; it seems like one a month to try to curry favour with voters.

It's also interesting that as they learn that people are really upset when they open their hydro bill and are shocked to see just how much they're going to pay for it, the government is saying, "Well, what are we going to do

about that?" They have a whole strategy. We were lucky to have somebody give us the strategy, Renewable Energy Matters—Campaign Outline from the Sussex consultant, that outlined the government's strategy. Everybody's bill is going up, and people can figure it out when they open their hydro bill and are shocked to look at it. A lot of it, as I said, is attributable to the green energy experiments. So what is the government's strategy, as given to them from Sussex?

1520

Well, on page 2 of their strategy, which we happen to have a copy of, "As renewable energy is also anticipated to be a wedge issue in the election, with the PCs supporting a move away from renewables"—well, that's not true, but that's what they're trying to portray—"this effort should consolidate industry and non-industry stakeholders in rallying support for a continued focus on green power as important economic, social, and energy policy in Ontario.

"In this, it will be critical to 'confuse' the issue in the political/public/media away from just price to include key value attributes such as jobs, clean air, farm income, etc. Renewables cannot be defined by price alone."

It's funny, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Finance, his responses to questions—that is his response. So he's obviously following this script dictated by the Sussex group to a T. When you go to page 7 of their "Strategic/Tactical/Logistical Considerations," it shows they are working with the government, because it states right in point number 1:

"Core messaging—Framing around jobs/investment, farm income, and environment/human health. Research needs to support this, and should be coordinated with" the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and the Ontario Power Authority—so, obviously, working closely with the government to implement this strategy to confuse the public so they won't just look at their hydro bill and blame the government; they will try to think that there are other wonderful things going on. So that is in effect the policy.

We're still waiting for that long-term energy plan from this government. Instead, each week we seem to get these seat-of-the-pants announcements. Apparently there is maybe one coming this week, but so far it has been a long time without a plan, and that's part of the reason we are seeing these huge increases in bills, and some of the basic core problems of identifying how they are going to supply baseload power, like dealing with nuclear power, which supplies about 50% of the power in the province that the government has not dealt with. They made many promises to shut down coal-fired generation. The only generating station that closed completely, Lakeview, was actually announced by past PC minister Elizabeth Witmer. That's a promise they made several times.

I will conclude by saying that we are supporting Bill 109, an act to amend the Taxation Act to do with the Ontario energy and property tax credit. It's a very minor break for seniors and property owners. We await a plan for the government to get its spending under control and

for it to come up with more substantive long-term plans for energy, which is so important to the economy of this province. So thank you, Madame Speaker. It was my pleasure to have had an opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very thankful that the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka has given me the opportunity to follow him, because he does set a very informed case on the debate. I think he said it all in his last remarks. He said that we are waiting for a long-term plan. That's kind of what this debate is about, technically, in the broadest sense; it summarizes. Madam Speaker, you would know; you are participating in the debates here each day or listening. This is probably the third or fourth swipe at the energy-smart, or not-so-smart, process in terms of what it does to the consumer.

It makes me think back to George Smitherman when he was the Minister of Energy. He took quite a spanking here in public just recently. I think a lot of it had to do with his misjudging that the people of Ontario were actually listening. The genesis of this defective plan starts—and I think, in fairness, it started with George Smitherman in Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. We're all for green energy, clean energy. They forgot the affordable energy piece. That's what happened here. They went right out of control and they just jumped right off the top of the mountain and landed where they've been hurt ever since, really.

When I look at that bill, the most devastating infection in the bill was the whole issue of feed-in tariffs. Even there, they screwed that up—or messed that up, pardon me—by saying that they had, first of all, 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour for small-scale solar operations. Then they cancelled it, after people had invested in it, and then they brought it back in. They haven't landed squarely on this issue. It has been in turmoil every single day. In fairness, our leader, Tim Hudak, has told us that this is a plan that has no plan attached to it; it's just a statement.

It's so bad that George Smitherman resigned. He knew that it was poison. He probably was in touch with a lot of people saying, "George, you got it wrong." So finally, he ran for mayor of the city of Toronto and the people followed him and fired him there, too. He'll probably be back in the federal seat—I think that there will be some changes there—but he knew enough to quit.

I'm asking the Premier today, does he know enough to quit? Gordon Campbell did.

Here's the key: It's not surprising that he's under some stress; he wasn't here today—and I shouldn't say that, so I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would caution the member.

Mr. John O'Toole: But the point is, I look around and the evidence is clear. Today's question period—in fairness, the leader of the NDP has been all over this like a spider web, really. They've ignited the people of Ontario, following the lead of our critic John Yakabuski as well. We were first to ignite the flame, and they've

just sort of carried it around for us. But it's clearly burning their house down.

This is one more example. Bill 109—I've spoken on this before, a couple of times, actually. I'm looking at it. I spoke on October 5 and on October 16, so if people want to refer back to Hansard, you can search it on Google and get much of what I have to say.

The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka brought some fresh energy to the debate, because it was part of the most recent fiscal update last week. They brought in some more changes.

The member from Kitchener—Conestoga has read the notes they gave her almost perfectly. There wasn't even a pronunciation error, because they're almost identical. It's standing up for things that don't stand up to the test.

But if I look back, not just on Bill 109—I'm going to look back a bit here. This bill here was first introduced on September 28. Just prior to that, they knew they had it wrong, because Bill 150, as I said, was completely out of order, the way it was given birth to at the time.

There was a bill just around that time that was called An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit.

This is the second part of the debate—you have to kind of follow along here—the first part being Bill 150. The second part is the—let's hear it now—HST. That made it even worse. Bill 150 and paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour—now slap 13% tax on the bill, and then you've got the tariff being fed in more expensively and some bailout money for the utilities, because a lot of the consumers in their base were complaining that they put out information with respect to people who couldn't pay their bills. They were getting ready for the winter onslaught of bills where people would be in default, perhaps, and disconnect charges then come in.

I listened to my riding and I knew, just by listening to my constituents—not politics. My constituents were telling me every single day—we track every call in our riding office, and I thank my riding office for the great work they do. We're the intake, we're the voice for the constituents. They call us, and we bring it up here in the Legislature. I'm going to mention some of them, because I've asked them if I could use their names.

The next bill that also started to give us some confidence—our leader, Tim Hudak, said to watch it, that they've fallen off the cliff on this thing—was Bill 122. Although it may not seem to be connected, it is. The auditor made some comments—An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector.

This is important because, in the budget sense, they're realizing that in the electricity file, they have created a monster bureaucracy, big time, under the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, and a number of other organizations. The IESO would be another one. There's probably about 100-plus people in each organization all making over \$100,000 a year, some over \$500,000. It's quite shocking, actually; that's not a pun or a play on words. In the whole electricity sector, there are a lot of oppor-

tunities being taken by the consultant groups, which have been spoken about in this House, and that's kind of in the consultations there.

1530

Again, as I said last week, another bill basically dealing with the same thing: Bill 135. This was a budget act. That's where they gave you the flat 10% reduction in your electricity bill.

Let's examine that 10% reduction a bit. Let's say your bill was \$100; on that, there would of course be the tax on the tax. There would be the delivery charge, the debt retirement charge—all that has been questioned here in the House, too, recently; this file is a complete mess—the \$7.8 billion that they've collected but they haven't paid it off against the stranded debt.

But if you took a bill of \$100—I'd ask the customers to look at their bill carefully. Watch it and call any of your MPPs, especially if they're Liberal members, because they're not listening. They're not acting like there's any problem on this file. About 60% of your bill at home is probably delivery charges, debt retirement, line loss charges—all these things. Very little of it is the electrons you use; the electrons are about 40% of the bill.

They talk about conservation. I fully endorse it. In fact, I don't think they're spending enough time on conservation.

But if you take your entire bill, the debt retirement, line loss—all those are basically a tax. So what they're doing is—you lump it all up, and the bill is now \$100. It's probably more like \$1,000, but we'll go with the easy numbers—\$100. On that, there's going to be a tax, the 13% tax, so it's \$113 now. They're going to give you back 10% starting next year sometime.

Mr. Jeff Leal: January 1.

Mr. John O'Toole: It'll start next year sometime. You can't trust them. There'll be another bill. I'm sure there'll be another bill. Just watch out.

They've said this temporarily. Now, what this does is—you take the 10% off, and that gives you about \$11, but you've paid \$13 in tax. They're paying you back with your own money. That's exactly what's happening. Don't let this shell game confuse the customer.

The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, I think, tried to bring some light to the fact that there is a strategy. I shouldn't disclose this here. There is a strategy, and there's a group that has written a report for them.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. I have it somewhere. Somebody may have stolen it. Lock the doors; I think somebody stole it.

Anyway, I think that strategy is by the group, but I'll find it as I go through my notes here.

The strategy is to try to confuse the consumers. I'm not going to criticize one of these strategy groups. They probably did it in the quiet for Premier McGuinty, Dwight and all the other people over there, because that strategy is to say, "Look, we've gone off the cliff on this thing. We need to confuse the consumer, the customer." Can you imagine having a strategy to confuse the people of Ontario? Oh, it's so cynical. Holy smokes—all this

stuff showing up on your bill. The debt retirement charge has accumulated, the debt interest payments and all these various things.

The smart meter, it turns out, is really a cash register.

Let's pay attention. I think the best—without me trying to make this up as I go along, what I'm going to do is I'm going to stick to the clippings today. All members are given this each day. It's mandatory reading. I'm just going to go through the weekend here to see what it says. "HST Fuelling Hydro Hikes..."—that's the first headline. I'm just going to read them. "Clean, Reliable Power Costs Money"—yes. Why didn't they think of that before these bills? Anyway, there's another one here. What does it say here? "Climate of Confusion." I'm not making this up. This one here is from the National Post: "Ontario's plan for green energy conversion has left companies in the dark." Wait a minute here. This is a two-pager; it's a big one. It's very complicated as well. It talks about the feed-in tariff.

Let's just turn the page. These are sequentially in the clippings today. One is, "Ontario's Powerful Sleight of Hand." That's an unparliamentary term, actually. And this one here is talking about clean energy benefits and the 10% reduction. This is the top-of-mind issue; cabinet office is scrambling now. They're working day and night trying to figure this thing out. It's off the rails. It is chaos. In fact, they're going over the cliff.

Here's another one: "Deregulation Has Led to Hydro Hikes"—surprise. Now, here's the issue. If Premier McGuinty is so intelligent—he always told the people of Ontario, "We're bringing in the smart meter because we knows what's right for you. You don't know what you're talking about." That's what he's basically saying, in code language. If he's so good, how come they've screwed this up so badly? I think the consumers are right. I have a list of people who have given me their names—and I'm going to use them shortly here, because I've only got half an hour left. I've already started. But this regulation has led to hydro hikes. I'm not making these up. The member from Peterborough, get your clippings out; read them.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He's reading them too. I'm sure his wife's not saying—I can imagine.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's an \$8.17 difference—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Peterborough.

Mr. John O'Toole: Here's another one: "Say No to Green Energy Sold at the Door." This is written by the Toronto Star, a very friendly, some would say biased, media outlet for the Liberal Party.

The next one here—I'm just reading these. "They've Put a Price on Human Life." Now, that was a question asked by the member from Whitby-Oshawa today, and I think the Minister of Health was struck. I hope she actually moves, but being struck by lightning is another thing.

Another topic here is "Mind-Body Disconnect." I'm not sure that's related to this energy file. It could easily be, though. "Emergency Room Waits Putting Patients at Risk." This is talking about 32 hours in the—you know,

you're paying all these taxes, the debt has doubled, and now you have to wait 32 hours in emergency in Ontario. You pay more and get less. That's the message. I'm not making this up; I'm reading, Madame Speaker, respectfully. "Time for Change" is the headline there. It sounds like Barack Obama made that one up. Anyway, "Political Storms a Good Sign." Well, there is a political storm. They're falling off the cliff. It says here, under "Political Storms a Good Sign:

"We'll see if next year's provincial election in Ontario will be Dalton McGuinty's Lorena Bobbitt moment. But the knives appear sharpened.

"The storm's strongest winds, however, right now are centred on Quebec...." Charest is the lowest in the poll; Premier McGuinty might be next. He's a nice fellow. Look, I didn't say anything negative. It's just that he's made a lot of bad, bad choices. You know, when a person gets hooked on spending money carelessly—billion-dollar boondoggles, hiring Samsung to solve our electricity problems—hello, we don't need Korea; we've got universities here, centres of excellence. It just upsets me so badly.

"Three Protesters Shut Me Down," "Idiot Mob Mentality"—I don't know what that one's about. It's a good article, actually. "How Do You Put a Price on Learning?" The price on you, the consumer, today is electricity, health care, money to foreign—I can't think of one thing they're doing right, really. The eco tax: Let's talk about that one. There's a good article in here. I'll read that too. Some companies have it buried in the products; some don't. The solution to the eco tax was actually working with industry to reduce the toxins or hazardous materials at the source, not taxing it. That doesn't get rid of them; that just gets money in the Premier's pocket. We want to solve the problem. They have no plan that I can see.

Okay, that's another one on insurance; that's not particularly relevant here. "Going for Broke"—that's another really good, interesting article. I won't go into too much detail on that one, but it does talk about the potential things that are on the block. My advice here is there has been some stuff in the media—Premier McGuinty considering selling Niagara Falls. I would hope that he never sells Niagara Falls. This is a cherished landmark. Think back to your history, now: Adam Beck, founder of electricity, Conservative government, power at cost, public power—things you can trust. That's what I'm talking about.

1540

There's another Liberal idea in here; it's really good. They like looking wherever they can get money out of your pockets. This one here is, "Why Not Bring Back Photo Radar?" The Liberal member introduced that bill today. It's just another one.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Peterborough said it's a good idea. What that was was getting money out of your pocket, and—

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I never said that, and I hope the member from Durham would retract that statement, because it's not correct.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Okay, thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: If the member from Peterborough didn't say it, it might have been the minister of whatever. However—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Great retraction.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I retract. The member from Peterborough didn't say it, but he probably would like to have said it or been first to say it.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It's not a point of order, but you can only speculate on—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Okay. I think it was the member from Don Valley East. Don Valley East said it. They can deny and deny and deny all they want. It was said by a Liberal member, respectfully, Madam Speaker—another tax grab.

Smart meters—oh, I don't know.

"Can the Environment Help Save the Economy?" Good article. I'd encourage people to read that one too. Researchers believe the environment will be one of the biggest industries—and I can say it is. In fact, right now, I would say, all of us—our leader has a very important policy position on the environment. We brought in the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, the largest national park formation in all of Canada. We were the lead in that whole thing. We were the first to actually close a coal plant. Elizabeth Witmer closed the Lakeview plant. They promised in 2003 to close the coal plants. They haven't closed one, not one. In fact, they're tuning up Nanticoke and the other plants—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Lambton.

Mr. John O'Toole: —Lambton etc., to burn a form of coal, biowaste, garbage—not garbage. But they're not closing them.

Not only that, but if I look at my riding of Durham, we have clean, reliable, safe nuclear plants that have been feeding 50% of Ontario's baseload for years at Pickering and Darlington and Bruce. They have failed to make a long-term commitment on safe, reliable—it's environmentally friendly. It's good for the environment. It meets Kyoto emissions.

What's all this flirting around with energy that costs 80 cents a kilowatt hour? I always like to remind my customers, consumers—I'm actually their customer. I work for my constituents in Durham, because Durham is a leading area. Our universities all focused on safe, reliable, affordable technology and energy: geothermal; power from hydrogen. There's so much going on at our universities. I could spend most—I don't have enough time here to say much more than that. I can only say that we are a leader in energy and will be and should be. I hope they're being included in some of the discussions in the long-range plan from Premier McGuinty. We certainly will be working with them, if given the privilege of running the province.

At least being honest with the people of the province of Ontario—that's the most important thing. People who try to trivialize, dismiss, who don't listen effectively to

what the people are saying—we're hearing it, on almost every file. I'm not making this up. These are the clippings. I'm going to go on here and I'm going to—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm just going to use my own clippings here. This is today's clippings, for the people of Ontario. All members get them. It's not that we're clever; it's just we're asked to read them. Some of them do; some don't even read them. But anyway, here's the first one. The first headline is "Off-peak Electricity Rates to Start Earlier." This is a very important one too. This is another admission that they got it wrong.

Smart meters: They spent about probably \$400 million or \$500 million setting up this system to transmit power to all the utilities. Veridian and Hydro One get this data from the user electronically into their billing system. The billing system calculates how much, and when they used it. That's why they're not smart meters; they're time-of-use meters. They figured, when people weren't sleeping, make the price high; when people were sleeping, make the price low. The regular price is about five to six cents per kilowatt hour. The peak price is about 10. And when is the peak price? When you get up, have a shower and make your breakfast, or when the kids come home from school and you're doing the dishes and getting the bath ready and all that stuff, washing the clothes. When it's off-peak is when you're asleep.

One day in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago, the Premier was questioned on this rather skilful, stiletto way of collecting money when people were awake. He said, "Why don't they do their washing on the weekend?" Instead of taking your kids to soccer or activities, put them on the couch, let them watch Nintendo or Game Boy or something. Get them out of the house? Be with the family. Family time—doing the laundry. I'm sure the Premier's doing his laundry. He probably sends it to the cleaners.

Anyway, Liberals stretch the off-peak period. Here's what this does. This doesn't change it. This does not change it. I'm going to read it for you, because it's worth it. This article is non-partisan—it's written by the Star.

Interjection: No.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Liberal briefing notes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's not non-partisan.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it is. It says here that they will not drop till May. That's just before the election. How cynical is that? Isn't that ridiculous? You can't—that's the thing here.

It says right here in the article:

"It'll be cold comfort for everyone coming home to cook supper and bathe the kids'....

"They are trying to pull any kind of a rabbit out of the hat," he said of the government...."

Right now, Bill 135, which is another bill—they're going to take 10% off the bottom line of your bill. I explained that earlier. If it's \$100, it's \$113 actually because of the tax, and they're going to give you back \$10. So they're really still making three bucks off you. What they're saying here is that they're going to switch

the time-of-use price, while the fixed charges—the debt retirement, the tax, the line loss and all that stuff—are not being reduced. What they're doing is, the time of use, which is the electrons part of the bill—which, as I said, is 40% of the bill. So with the smallest part of the bill, really, they're going to give you a change in the rate. The change in the rate is going to be a couple of hours. They're not changing it; they're going to start it later. I hope your kids go to bed early, because otherwise it's still going to cost you a lot.

Here's the next headline. I'm not making this up. It's important. Sometimes we get accused of being too critical or too cynical with the Premier. This one here says, "Preem"—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: How disrespectful.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the Sun: "Preem Smartens Up on Hydro Rates." It's true. Everybody's talking about it. How could he have missed this one? Some of those consultants he's paying a million dollars a month to—that's what they spend in consultants, a million dollars a month. Isn't that shameful? It's money out of the people's pockets. These pages here should be talking to their parents and asking them if they know how much they're spending a month in consultants. It's absolutely discouraging. Meanwhile, your parents are trying to save for your university education.

The Toronto Sun article goes on: "Time-of-use customers—who pay three different rates for electricity depending on when they use it—have been charged mid-peak rates 5 p.m.-9 p.m. during the months of May to October."

Now I know, too, that in this bill here, Bill 109, the cost per year, according to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, is \$1.3 billion in annual support. The 10% cut is \$1 billion a year as well. Where are they going to get the money? This starts to get confusing. It's part of that strategy—where is that strategy paper? I've got to find that strategy paper. You could maybe get up and look, Bob. The only thing is, the strategy to confuse people is actually—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Never mind. It doesn't matter. I don't need it. I've probably read it five or six times anyway.

My point being that it's clear now that they are using the strategy group's confuse, dither and delay strategy or tactic. They are. I've come to realize that there's \$2 billion now—it's two different bills, of course, Bill 135, which is the budget bill or the fiscal update bill, and Bill 109—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Never mind. These are all carefully arranged so that I can't lose them.

1550

With Bill 109, the interesting part here is that it's \$1.3 billion. They have a deficit right now, about \$18.5 billion. Now, the reason it's only \$18.5 billion is that they sold Teranet, which is the property of the Ontario land registry system—electronically. They sold the use of that

system, Teranet, for \$1 billion. Some of the members on the other side don't understand it, really. It's unfortunate they don't. But here's the deal: It's a 50-year contract. That won't even exist in 50 years. They bring the \$1 billion into income—it shows as revenue this year—so that the deficit isn't as big—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, the member there from Northumberland, the member for Peterborough should be quiet. They'll have their time. I'm looking forward to your responses. I'll be making notes on that too. I know you're touchy on this because it's a subject you're weak on.

But anyway, the whole point is that there is \$2.5 billion in commitment here when they already have an operating deficit. It's really important you learn this. The budget is about \$107 billion, roughly, and the deficit is \$20 billion. Now that's 20%; they are spending 20% more than they're earning. This is a double-edged sword. Here's the problem: The \$20 billion each year goes into the debt. Well, they've doubled the debt in less than seven years. They've doubled it. It looks fine now. It's like the mortgage fraud thing that went on in the States. The debt now is manageable because interest on that debt is about 1.3%. What if the interest goes to 5%? They're bankrupt.

This reminds me of when Premier Bob Rae, now Liberal Bob Rae, was in government and they brought in the social contract. I was the chair of finance in the region of Durham at the time, the municipality. They had what they called the expenditure reduction plan—you probably remember that as well—prior to the social contract. What it was is, they were asking municipalities—the member from Scarborough-Pickering would know. He was the mayor of Pickering at the time and a very good mayor. I'm surprised he didn't stay. But anyway, the fact is he's not in cabinet here. He should be. I will say that he should be because I saw his leadership in Pickering.

Here's the key, though: That whole issue and episode here to me is that they've really got the plan wrong, and they did back then. The expenditure reduction plan was basically to lay people off. That's what it was. That's really what it does. The issue was at the time—if you look at provincial spending or any public sector spending, about 75% of the operating budget, is payroll—75%.

Mr. Rinaldi was also a mayor, and the member from Peterborough was a long-serving Peterborough councillor who I'm sure served many budgets. We're all going through that. So the whole public sector, the MUSH sector—municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—all spend a considerable amount of money. The province of Ontario itself, its own-purpose spending, is much smaller than the MUSH sector. The MUSH sector spends most of the money. It's all payroll. There's nothing wrong with that. I respect the services.

But when the economy is going in the tank, over the cliff, which it is, you've got to make—cut a tree down, apply knowledge and skills to it, make it into a table or

computer desk; that's called a value-added economy. But service-sector economies do not create wealth. They create quality of life and they spend money. That's what they do. It's very important that you have good judges, good professors, good nurses, good doctors, good teachers, good professional people. But when the economy is going over the cliff—and if you look around, this is not new.

Ireland was called the Celtic Tiger; Greece—they're all going over the cliff. Portugal is next; Spain. Europe is in chaos and we're following on many of the same suggestions. They keep citing, "Look what they're doing in Europe." I look around the world and I say, "Okay, Denmark is highly regarded, environmentally friendly, clean, with a good social and moral fabric. What do they pay for electricity in Denmark?" So I looked it up.

Interjection: How much, John?

Mr. John O'Toole: Thirty-four cents a kilowatt hour. Well, it better be clean. And it's a good way to promote conservation because it's so expensive you can't afford it. The people who are on the bottom rung of the income ladder are getting killed—shivering in the dark. Older people will be shivering in the dark. Premier, you're on the wrong road.

This tax credit, this Bill 109, is something we support. Our critic, Mr. Miller, said that; I've said it. I've said it twice and I'm going to say it again today. But it's an admission that they've gone too far, too fast, on this whole energy file and the taxing. Seniors are being taxed out of their very homes. I feel I've got to put these people's names on the record.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Put them on the record.

Mr. John O'Toole: They are. They're my constituents who have clearly given me permission, and I'm going to.

I'm going to read—why couldn't I get more time to speak on this? Here's the other point: I'm going to mention the names first for Hansard: Peter Box, who is intelligent and well informed. He lives in an apartment with his wife, retired—I would say a British fellow, very meticulous. When he writes me emails, I pay attention. In fact, I credit him with a lot of the—and I would suggest that he may not be a supporter, but he does know that I stand up for him—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't care if he supports me, really, as long as he's paying attention. All of us should pay attention to our constituents.

Russell Branch is another effective, well-informed—he may be a veteran, I think. Bob Beamish, Alan Bickell, Loran and Betty Pascoe, Margaret Seed. I have copies of their handwritten—with your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I'm going to read some of them, out of respect for the time they took not just to quickly flip you an email from a distribution list, as some of them do, as you know. We all get these—500 people get it, including you, and they expect you to fix it. I know you're effective, too, in your riding. I've heard you speak about it.

This is from Mr. Branch: "I have just got my hydro bill. It is about the same for two months as it was for

three.” So that means it has gone up by 30%—the same for two months as it was for three. “I will admit that we have never used the air conditioner as much as the last two months. What I object to is there is no current reading and previous reading. Are we supposed to take Veridian’s word on how much we use with no way of checking our meter? I think that the last two months of hot weather prove my theory that something must be done about the HST for old people who are home all day, or people with disabilities who must use their air conditioner.

“We try to conserve and according to this article we will have to pay for less usage” they can’t afford.

Russell Branch has it right. You’re going to use less and you’re going to pay more. That’s a double-edged sword. Whack ‘em and stack ‘em; that’s what that is.

As far as I’m concerned, he has written me a couple of letters that are all—it’s clear that he’s informed, involved and aware of what’s being done to him. He feels powerless to do anything about it, and he’s a senior. I believe he served our country; if not, he has served our community.

He was responding to an article here that says, “Toronto Hydro Seeks 18% Residential Rate Hike.” Wait a minute; where’s it going to stop?

I asked the Premier today: When is it going to stop? Please, take your foot off people’s chests. They’re having difficulty breathing.

Some of them are—

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: Some of them become engaged when I start pointing out these facts. They’re trying to get me to stop reading them. These are my constituents, and this is another one from Peter Box and his wife, Christine: “New electricity rates (TOU) combined with HST.” That’s the topic; this is an email. Thank you very much, Peter, for this one. I do have his permission as well. “I really do thank you for your call yesterday and your attempt to show concern over the plight of seniors.” I at least said, “Look, I feel sorry.” I didn’t say I was going to fix it. I would say that Premier McGuinty is the government. He has the keys to the truck. Get in it and get driving. Get her out of the ditch. “Please take”—this is from Peter now—

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: Don’t interrupt Peter, please. You can interrupt me; that’s different.

“Please take my following comments in the spirit in which they are offered—no malice, no bad criticism just honest-to-goodness comments on the scene as I see it.

“I do wish that I had made a recording of our discussion to play back to you and show where I was correct in my original assessment of politicians. I lost count of the times you tried to change the topic (either on purpose or without thinking I can’t tell).” I wasn’t trying to obfuscate, unlike what happens here regularly. He asked one question; he had another answer. Or you ask what time it is, and they make you a watch. “But you showed a great reluctance to keep to the topic that was the subject of my

endeavours since day 1. You showed, as I said, a reluctance to talk of seniors and their problems to the effect that I now doubt that these subjects have been brought up at any of your caucus meetings, and if they have, to no conclusion.... Even though you state that you are a senior, you showed a drastic lack of insight into the plight of seniors in apartments paying their own hydro—to the point where I might have to slot you in the same envelope as Matthew Hellin (you know him) who, I quote, said, ‘I cannot put myself in your position.’

1600

“Below you will find a summarization of my main points as laid out to Matt (no specific response, as usual).

“As to your suggestion re getting involved on the local senior scene—unless you have a death wish, you don’t want me that close.”

Anyway, he makes a point that seniors are struggling, and he’s made it several times.

Margaret Seed says many of the same things, as well as Loran Pascoe.

“As a retired pensioner, we pay \$263 a month, 12 months a year, for our hydro, as our house is heated by electric. With the 8% increase in July and the additional cost of the smart meter, plus the increase that Hydro is looking for in the fall, how are we or any seniors going to afford that. Something has to be done....

“Also, I read in the paper that our local councillor ... received something ... to go to [a] meeting at Veridian, plus in total she received \$119,727 for a part-time job. What gives?

“Thanks for your time,

“Loran and Betty Pascoe.”

I will only say that these people are concerned; that’s the point.

Now, in fairness, the Premier has admitted it, but two wrongs don’t make a right. They have this file so messed up that it’s been the subject of question period almost this whole session; you know that as well. Our leader, Tim Hudak, and our critic, John Yakabuski, have tried to reach out to various stakeholders—seniors and others—and to speak to the issue of conservation, giving consumers the right tools at the right time to be able to affect the outcomes of their bill; and to have a choice of whether you want a smart meter or some other plan. These are options for people that they want. And they’re different; there isn’t a one-size-fits-all. The point that Mr. Box and others were making is that seniors are home a good part of the day, when the government assumes that the smart meter price during the afternoon would be lower. They leave it up. Why wouldn’t they lower it? Why wouldn’t they have a tax credit for seniors? That’s exactly what’s happened. So this group, Peter Box, Russell Branch, Bob Beamish, Alan Bickell, Loran and Betty Pascoe, and Margaret Seed, should be very, very satisfied that they have actually effected change here at Queen’s Park.

Now, I would like to think that it was because of their advocacy that I was allowed to speak on their behalf; I am their representative; and that our leader, Tim Hudak,

has forced this issue, to the extent that—in fairness, the NDP as well have done a commendable job in saying that one of the Premier's options could be to take the HST off the electricity bill. The fact is—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, Madam Speaker, they're barracking again. In fact, they're not. I'm going back to Electricity 101. If your bill is \$100, that means you're going to pay \$113. What they're going to do is give you 10% back. Let's do the numbers here: 10% of \$110 is \$11. You've collected \$13, so they're still making money on the backs of seniors. They're trying to do the shell game thing here. It's simply unfair.

It's part of the strategy that was introduced here that I've been looking for all afternoon; somebody stole it on me. What's the name of that group?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sussex Strategy.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Sussex group—the Sussex Strategy Group. They were probably paid thousands and thousands of dollars, and they came up with this obfuscation plan, how to skate around the issue, how to talk about debt retirement charge, stranded debt, line loss and all these—Madam Speaker, look at your bill. If it was \$75 last month and it's \$100 this month, then you're paying more. That's what the strategy was: to confuse, delay, dither and deny. The new strategy of the Liberal government: Collect as much as you can.

Even the HST, in fairness, is part of the problem with this bill. When they implemented the HST, they tried to slip in the eco tax. They got caught on that one and the consumers would not stand for paying more eco tax than the cost of the battery that they were buying. Here's the deal: They kind of backed off on that, but I don't believe it's gone. I think I read the words “for now.” The election's in October 2011. Stay tuned, because I think it's putting pressure on the government to do the right thing is the right thing. The right thing is the right politics, too; the right policy is the right politics. That's what I feel is being ignored, the right policy and the right politics. I believe our leader, Tim Hudak, has got a plan; I'm aware of some of it. The people of Ontario will get their chance.

Here's the deal: Don't promise more than you can deliver. Be straightforward with people. Tell them the motive all the time of why these changes are necessary. We support conservation. We support clean energy. They say that we're for the coal plants and all that stuff—no, no. Coal plants have been here for hundreds of years; it was the baseload in Britain and all over the world. If you swallow that, you're being misled.

We closed the only coal plants that have ever been closed. We've closed the only coal plants—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: The member in his zeal appears to have strayed into unparliamentary language: “misled.”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would the member retract “misled,” please?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I withdraw that comment if it offended the member from Mississauga South—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He's not Mississauga South; he's Mississauga-Erindale.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mississauga-Erindale? Well, there you go. I didn't know who he was, actually.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Try again.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Streetsville?

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, he's a well-intended member and he's trying to deflect.

If I use language—in many cases, I was using language that I've read in the paper here recently. You weren't here; most of the afternoon you haven't been here, actually.

But the real point I'm trying to make, though, is that when you're looking at policy in this kind of debate, where this is kind of—I'm trying to sum it up. Madam Speaker, I may have to seek unanimous consent for more time, because my arguments haven't been completely established. But we'll wait.

Here's the deal, though. I was thinking that if we have—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Actually, I know they're upset. They're worried. I understand that. The poll today is a good example of that.

Here's the issue, though: If they wanted to get this right, they would admit that they've made three critical errors. One is that they would have to recognize that the HST implementation plan was simply wrong; it failed. Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, failed. The smart meter implementation failed. They have backtracked on every single one of those policy announcements. And backtracking is becoming their predictable behaviour when cornered, much like a scared little mouse or other creature of that breed.

We think that good policy is good politics, and often the truth will always be the best policy. The promises they've made on certain things have proven that people have been paying attention for seven years and are now less trustworthy of a once decent—I don't know. The Premier seems to have lost his way. This is what I feel. Personally, I know how hard it must be when you're spending more money than you're earning. You're maxing out the credit card, it will soon affect your credit rating, and if the interest rate ever goes up, you're going to have a serious problem. You're going to have to sell the house. I hope they don't sell Niagara Falls, though. I think that of all the things that they could do, this would be the most problematic. It's symbolic to the whole energy file that Sir Adam Beck started.

1610

I think if you look at Gordon Campbell as an example, who just recently resigned, unfortunately, he did not tax gasoline on the HST. When they went in on the HST, there were no exemptions, even though they were allowed. Then they signed the agreement with a poison pill provision, which means they got \$4.3 billion from Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Harper to implement. They knew that it was going to be expensive to implement the HST, and rather than use it to offset certain things, they didn't. They are going to give you three cheques to try to buy

you off, in a way, with your own money again, because that's federal tax.

Gordon Campbell also had to—you know, they're going to be voted out of office because of the HST in British Columbia. I would say that in Ontario, there could probably be consequences for some of the policies and decisions they've made in the last while.

In conclusion, I would seek unanimous consent for a little bit more time to wrap up my remarks. I seek unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member has moved unanimous consent to extend his time. Is it the pleasure of the House—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Motion defeated.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I would have gladly listened to the member from Durham for a longer time, because when I listen to him, it is sort of this ongoing stream of consciousness. Just as the ideas come to him, he expounds upon them. It's always a pleasure to listen to him. He said so many things in the course of his 50 minutes or so that it's hard to know where to start, given a minute and a half.

I want to thank him for the kudos that he gave to the leader of the NDP early on in his speech for carrying the issue in the House and around the province. In fact, he is absolutely correct that the editorial opinion has been near unanimous on the position she has taken and our party has taken around this issue, especially around taking the HST off hydro. It has got far more editorial support and far more support from writers of news columns than anything the government has attempted to do.

In terms of what this government is doing and what he described at some length—and I think we all have to agree with him—it's that this government has attempted to literally plug the holes in a leaking dike. As they have come up with these policy solutions that aren't working, they very quickly discover, to their chagrin, that they're not being bought out there. So they're plugging the holes in a leaking dike as the complaints come and the complaints come, and this is but one of the very recent ones, where people who are seniors and people on fixed incomes have complained bitterly about how this is going to cost them a lot of money and how life is much more difficult for them today than it was in past. Hence, we have this bill to try to assuage those few fears that they have and to try to buy the government some time. The member from Durham is absolutely right when he talks about that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's a pleasure do a two-minute response to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, as well as the member from Durham. I always enjoy hearing the finance critic, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I get to work closely with him, as the PA to finance. The member from Durham—well, it was loquacious, to say the least. As the member from

Beaches-East York said, it was stream of consciousness; we'll give you that.

The criticism—you know, we heard a lot of this loquaciousness, and at the end what I heard the member say was that the Progressive Conservative caucus will be supporting Bill 109, which is the right thing to do, and the criticism was insipid at best.

I think what we need to do is hear from the people of Ontario who will be benefiting from the Ontario energy and property tax credit, and I want to share with you what John Thompson says, the chair of CARP for chapter 25 in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, serving Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich townships, as well as all of Kitchener-Waterloo. John says, "In my opinion, the Ontario energy and property tax credit increase for seniors is a very positive, progressive and compassionate strategy to assist Ontario seniors, many who are on fixed incomes. A tax break for the necessities of life—shelter and energy—will provide additional personal resources for seniors to enhance their quality of life in other discretionary aspects of their personal budgets."

This credit for seniors is "a wise decision to assist those who have, over their adult lives, contributed so much to the prosperity of the province of Ontario." We thank John Thompson for that.

I'll just leave you with a comment from a woman named Millie who is 87 years old. I met her at the OEPTC announcement in my riding and she grabbed my hand and said, "Leeanna, thank you for this credit. Whatever the numbers are, what I need you to know is that for me in my home, this is priceless."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Various people have said various things about the comments that were made, particularly by my colleague the member from Durham, from "stream of consciousness" to "loquacious" and various other comments.

The fact of the matter is that there is a thread of truth that has gone through all of the comments that he's made this afternoon when he has been able to go through today's press clippings and the press clippings from the weekend. There are of course many issues that are related to energy, but even some of the ones that weren't directly related all come back to it, because it is such a huge issue for the province of Ontario. It's been so badly mismanaged by this government that the chickens are coming home to roost in different areas, not just in the energy bills that are rising, but with respect to the increasing pressures on our health care system and the fact that we can't move forward because we're going to be saddled with all of this debt with post-secondary, primary and secondary education.

All of these themes relate to the energy file because they relate not just to the price of energy for internal consumers in the province of Ontario, but also to how we are going to be able to attract businesses to locate in this province, to start businesses, to start employing people, to start creating the revenues that we really need so that we're going to be able to pay off this billion-dollar debt

that they're creating for us by this reduction in energy bills right now.

What we really need is a balanced, comprehensive energy plan. We haven't seen it from this government to date. We keep hearing about it and we're ever hopeful, but really, based on what we've seen so far, I'm not going to be holding my breath, to put it that way.

We need to provide relief to people in a real way in the province of Ontario, and the way that this government is going about doing it with this piece of legislation—by taking away from one hand and then taking away with the other hand, by taking away the previous \$900 property tax credit and now replacing it with a \$700 plus a \$200 energy credit—really doesn't get people any further ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to say that the member from Durham is one of the few people in this chamber who can speak at length in the fashion that he speaks in. I appreciate the fact that whichever English teacher he had who introduced him to James Joyce and Ulysses has made a great contribution to the spoken language in this province.

The member from Durham talked about the weaknesses of what's before us. He talked about the simple reality that people are seeing their standard of living dropping. In consequence, their anger at the Liberal government is growing and this government is flailing—I don't think that's too strong—flailing about, trying to find a button they can hit that will calm people down. I think the member from Durham was quite correct in saying, you know what? You can hit as many buttons as you want. When you make people as unsettled as they are, put them in difficult circumstances, make it hard for them to carry on their daily lives, when you press them hard enough, at a certain point, even if you are giving back the money that they've paid to you, they are not inclined to be kind or tender in their feelings towards you.

He is quite correct in saying that seniors who are hard pressed need assistance, but more fundamentally, they need relief from the kind of action this government has taken that is pressing them as hard as it is.

In his comments, the member detailed those difficulties and talked about the problems his constituents are dealing with. Many of my constituents say similar things when I talk to them. This debate is the beginning of a larger debate, not the end of one.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: If I could seek unanimous consent for four—but anyway, I'll wrap it up here.

I would only say that the reflection with respect to being loquacious and the idea that perhaps James Joyce influenced me—I'd prefer to think that it was Dylan Thomas who actually gave me some insight into those commentaries.

1620

However, I will say this: I think the media got it right today, actually, when I looked at this article here. It says, "Preem Smartens Up on Hydro Rates." We're not alone on this side, trying to bring to the attention of the people of Ontario that the plan is this plan from Sussex Group, the renewable energy matters campaign outline. You should get your hands on it. Call my office. We'll be happy to get you a copy of this plan. It was the plan to deflect, delay, deny, dither and complicate your energy bill. The real truth here is that you're paying more and being blamed for not using less, and that's their energy policy. It's unfair to you; it's unfair to the people of Ontario not to be straightforward.

These comments that have been made today—I want to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth as well as the member from Beaches–East York, both of whom I respect. I understand their position on this file.

In contrast, I don't understand Premier McGuinty's position on this file. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga is a former teacher. I hope that they haven't taken the sign down off the door.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: She was an excellent vice-principal, I'm sure, and a committed educator. We're so short of those good people now.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa also, I think, was right. If you follow what your constituents are saying—I say to the Liberal members—if you listen to what your constituents are saying, in all segments of society and all income groups, all the way from businesses that say energy is too expensive to do business here in manufacturing, all the way down to seniors who are in their homes each day, perhaps on electric heat, this is not in any way going to help you. This bill is just a little admission that they made a big mistake.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to have a second speech today on a government bill.

I just want to touch on the explanatory note so that everyone who is watching is aware. It's the act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007, to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit. The explanatory note in this bill says, "The Taxation Act, 2007 is amended to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit announced in the 2010 Ontario Budget." It's still 2010, so I guess it's not too late. "The Ontario energy and property tax credit will apply for the 2010 and subsequent taxation years and will have two components: a property tax amount and an energy amount. For 2010, the tax credit is claimed in income tax returns filed by qualified individuals for the year. Starting in 2011, the Ontario energy and property tax credit is calculated using income information from income tax returns filed for the previous year, but is payable directly to eligible individuals in four quarterly instalments during the second half of the year and the first half of the following year."

If I read that right, there should be a cheque sometime in the middle of next summer, with one promised for

sometime in the fall. I have to say that that has to be more than fortuitous. It can't simply be that some accountant somewhere thought that would be a convenient time to send out cheques.

What we're dealing with here is a political problem that the government faces. I touched on it when I made my remarks about the member from Durham's speech. This government has made substantial mistakes in the way it has governed Ontario. Premier McGuinty has made profound errors on the electricity file. In introducing the HST, he has introduced a tax that substantially transfers wealth from the bulk of the population to some of the wealthiest corporations in Ontario, and the time of consequences draws near. The time of the 2011 election draws near. When we in this chamber spend time thinking about bills, it is best for us to keep that reality in mind.

I take the opportunity, as a number of members in this chamber do, to go and talk to my constituents at their doors on a regular basis. I have to say to you that there are three things this government has done that are causing it and will continue to cause it profound difficulties. One is its electricity policy, and I will give you a fair amount of detail on that. Second is the fact that it did not correct the downloading of expenses on municipalities when the economy was strong: That burden on the backs of people in our cities and towns and villages across Ontario continues to be substantial and causes an anger that this government is having to deal with, which is why we have a property tax credit before us in the bill today. And there's the HST itself, with all the difficulties that come in its train.

When I talk to people in their homes, when I go to the homes of people in my riding in East York, bungalows that were built with the \$2,000 that returning soldiers got from World War I or the loans that soldiers received when they got back from World War II, modest homes, well-maintained, inhabited, in many cases, by people who were born there and lived their whole lives there and are now looking at a situation where, between their pensions and their property taxes, their food bills and their HST, their electricity bills and their need to make sure that they're well-clothed, that they have some of the necessities of modern life, they find that increasingly it is difficult for them to hold on to those homes, homes, as I've said, that they may well have been born in and grown up in. As you can imagine, the attachment is profound, and when they feel that their stability in this home, which is part of their being, is threatened, then they become very unhappy.

When I talk to Chinese seniors in my riding, in homes that they have been in for 30 or 40 years, in which they have raised families, and they now find that on their restricted circumstances as a pensioner, they are increasingly finding it hard to cover all the bills that are coming at them, then again, it is no surprise, no mystery that they become extraordinarily cranky at the situation they find themselves in. Frankly, when you are deeply attached to a place, when you have done everything you

could, foregone holidays, done without, done everything you could for your children and your family and find even then that having played by the rules and contributed generously to a society, you are being pushed out, then your frustration and anger can boil over. And they do. They make very clear to me their concerns about what they're facing.

Now, earlier today in question period, the Minister of Finance was asked about his energy credit. He went on at some length about how the Conservatives used tax money to deal with their electricity cost problem—which is true. But for this Minister of Finance to use that as an accusation against someone else is quite extraordinary because, in fact, that is what we're doing today. There is an electricity affordability problem. The minister has brought forward legislation that will use tax money to subsidize people's electricity bills. It's as simple as that. That is the reality. We will have a chance to debate his further initiative to borrow \$1 billion per year to give people a subsidy directly on their electricity bill, something that he takes great offence at and uses as a criticism of another party. Frankly, I think that there may be times when it makes sense to use tax money to help deal with electricity bills, maybe a time when it makes sense to use revenue from electricity to help pay for the larger budget. That isn't an ideological question for me. What is extraordinary, though, is that for the finance minister, it is the subject, the heart of an accusation. For him to make an accusation about something that he himself is doing both in this act and another is, to me, extraordinary.

This bill before us is meant to give people a little bit of money every quarter during an election year and presumably for every quarter thereafter.

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If we look at why people are finding it difficult to pay their hydro bills, we need to look at what has been the McGuinty policy on electricity. What has he actually done to provide people in this province with electricity, how has he gone about it and what are the financial consequences of the choices that he made? I'll go into more detail, but just a quick list: Bringing in the HST and applying it to an essential like electricity has made life difficult for a lot of people. He didn't have to make that choice. He did not have to make that choice. He still has, in the time remaining to him before the election, the opportunity to correct at least part of his mistake when it comes to the electricity bills. If this government talks about the burden of the cost of electricity on seniors, it might well look to a decision that it itself made to put that burden on the backs of seniors.

This government might have engaged in an analysis of what our real hydro needs are. I have to tell you, I didn't get a chance to do the preparation for this speech that I wanted; I was preparing for another. Up until the latter half of the 1990s, the old Ontario Hydro kept a database of electricity consumption, sector by sector, so they had a sense of how many air conditioners there were in the province and how many homes were not air-conditioned. They knew the air conditioning load in the centre of each

city. They had a sense, numerically, statistically, in a database, of how much equipment was consuming how much power and what the potential was for growth.

My understanding was that that database research was discontinued in the Harris regime and was never reinstated by this government, so that when this government looks at demand for power and thus makes decisions to commit itself to a billion-dollar power plant, it does it on the basis not of that sort of in-depth research but on the basis of drawing a line from where things have been in the past. That is not a wise way to make a decision, and I'll speak to that at greater length.

This government decided to invest in smart meters and put a burden on the backs of seniors, put a burden on the backs of the rest of people in this society, with very little to show for it. That was a multi-billion dollar mistake in purchasing that is on the backs of these seniors, who are going to get a small part of that money back because of this bill.

This government did not deal with the question of privatization. It costs a lot of money to subsidize private companies to provide power. Bruce Power is getting a very, very good deal on Bruce energy. It is in a position where that nuclear power complex, which is having—what is it?—a \$2-billion overrun on its current phase, having had an overrun in the past which was equivalent to about 100% of the initial cost—that company got \$60 million last year for power it didn't produce. That company has got a very good sweetheart deal from the province of Ontario.

Gas companies get to build gas-fired power plants and sell power at a very good price.

The global adjustment mechanism: Those private power companies that sell into the market and find the market doesn't pay them enough get their losses covered in the global adjustment.

This government has made a commitment to nuclear power being the bulk of the power that we are going to pay for, for many, many years to come.

All of those pieces together—and I will go through them—show at the core a mistake on the part of this government in understanding what has to be done with electricity. There are consequences to making multi-billion dollar mistakes. People in this province are currently paying for them every day and, if the Minister of Finance is to be believed, with his graph in his economic update, are going to be paying a lot more for them in the next five to 10 years. That's of consequence, and even an energy tax credit is not going to deal with those consequences. We'll address it in a small way, but we'll not do it in a fundamental way.

Once in a generation a population gets the opportunity to reshape its infrastructure. Frankly, over the last century, we have built an electricity system in Ontario, with renewable power initially at its core, that served us well. Power at cost, public power based on renewable sources and hydro made us an industrial dynamo. It's critical to the standard of living that we have. That system over the century that was expanded into coal and into nuclear, that system that required the stringing of

thousands of kilometres of high-voltage transmission lines—that whole system is coming to a point where it has to be rebuilt.

It's coming to a point where part of it has to be shut down—coal-fired power—for reasons that you well understand, Speaker. People die from lung and heart disease related to the emissions from those coal plants. The climate that we depend on for our prosperity is being changed in part because of the contribution of those coal plants.

We here in this province, in a once-in-a-generation opportunity, can rebuild that electricity system to reflect the most advanced technologies of the 21st century, to reflect our needs as we understand them at this point in human history, and to use the development of electricity just as we did at the beginning of the 20th century: to make ourselves an economic power.

If you do that, there are many things that you have to have in mind that this government did not have in mind. If you're going to get rid of coal, which you have to, then you have to recognize that, that power being relatively cheap, you have to replace with it as much cheap power as you can. That wasn't part of this government's thinking. Instead of going for conservation and efficiency, the next-cheapest source energy that we can access, our old hydro plants being the absolute cheapest—instead of doing that in a strategic way that made that the centre of what we did, no, that has been a marginal effort. I will go into some detail on that. We've seen an investment in very expensive generation—gas-fired peak power plants, nuclear power plants—but very little investment in the conservation and efficiency that would allow us to balance out these new costs so that power would be affordable, so that we would not be pressing the province's economy and pressing the people of this province with bills that they find very hard to carry.

If you allow what was set in motion by the Harris-Eves government, the ongoing privatization of the system, then you undermine the affordability of the system. If you were to do a survey of power costs in the United States comparing private to public systems, consistently you would find the publicly owned systems were less expensive. Set technology aside for a moment. Having a publicly owned electricity infrastructure allows you to provide power at a lower cost. This government limited Ontario Power Generation, said that it couldn't develop new renewable power; didn't engage in large-scale leasing of energy efficiency technologies and renewable power to the public, to the public sector; and thus continued a process of privatization that, to this day, drains money out of the economy of this province.

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Is it any surprise that people have affordability problems? Is it any surprise that the government is trying to paper those over with this bill? No, it is no surprise. You make a fundamental strategic error at the beginning by not investing in conservation and efficiency. You don't understand that you have to balance new, higher costs with new, low-cost power so that you preserve affordability. You make sure that privatization continues the

pace, and right there, even without other matters, you set up Ontario for great difficulties in the years to come.

Right now in Ontario, there are hospitals that are running boilers to provide steam and heat for their operations that could be making electricity at the same time—cogeneration. We have thousands of megawatts of potential there for this province; we are developing a very small portion. There is a waste water treatment plant—a sewage treatment plant—in Ottawa, their main plant that, recognizing that it was going to be running boilers 24 hours a day, invested in cogeneration and cut their electricity bill by about \$1 million to \$1.5 million per year. We have never picked up on that opportunity in Toronto. We haven't had the OPA sit down and say, "How can we take advantage of the gas we're already burning?" So we haven't taken advantage of those low-cost opportunities.

Again, this is a government that is welded to private power interests, to gas interests, to fossil fuel interests, to nuclear interests, and that has turned its back on those options that in the end would make power far more affordable. Renewable power—and I'm talking about the broad range of it. There's no doubt that right now wind turbines cost more than our historic hydro power. They cost a lot less than new nuclear. There's no doubt that solar power is more expensive than nuclear right now, but in the long run, the jurisdictions that develop that power develop the manufacturing and technological leads that will allow them to compete on a global basis. But you have to balance it out. You have to make sure there are low-cost operations as well.

There is a hotel that has been built in this city on College Street that uses geothermal heating and cooling. They pump the heat out of the ground in the winter. They pump the cooling out of the ground in the summer. That system will pay for itself in eight years. In other words, the capital cost of putting it in is something that is covered by the savings in eight years, and after that it's gravy. The owner is able to pay substantially less for heating and cooling than they would if they were hooked up to the grid.

That kind of renewable power set up on a large-scale basis in Ontario would give people lower operating costs for their business and their homes and reduce pressure on the grid as a whole. That is a strategy that would make sense with renewable power that's cheaper than current conventional power. Did this government, has this government engaged in large-scale investment in that kind of renewable power? You know as well as I do: No, it has not, and thus it has set a course for high-cost electricity; thus it has meant that people take more out of their pockets to pay TransCanada PipeLines for their buildings and their power plants than we otherwise would be paying.

When you make decisions to build a \$1-billion gas-fired power plant or a multi-billion-dollar nuclear plant, it shapes where you put your wires, and those hydro towers that people see are very, very expensive to put in place. If, in fact, your home, my home, the homes of people who are watching right now, have dramatically less need

for power, then there would be less need for more transmission lines and there would be less need for investment in transformer stations. The whole pressure on the electricity system would be reduced and the need to put in new lines, new transformer stations would be reduced or eliminated. That would be a far more intelligent option than what we have before us—a blind commitment to reproducing the mistakes in nuclear power we've made in the past, a blind commitment locking us into gas-fired power plants that are very expensive. It is no wonder that this government needs a bill to paper over its mistakes, because these mistakes are very large. This government is papering over an abyss. It is an abyss that may well swallow the McGuinty government.

Smart meters, or not-so-smart meters, time-of-use meters—the published cost that we've seen is about \$750 per meter. That's roughly 150 bucks for the installation and the meter itself, and then there's the back end, all of the operations you need to collect the data and get the data out. That's a number that was published in the *National Post*. That was a number that I've discussed with journalists in this building. There are roughly four million meters in Ontario. At that rate, you're talking a cost of somewhere between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion. It's a lot of money.

When you put in smart meters, your assumption is that people whose hydro bills are predominantly heating, cooling and hot water will be able to do something to substantially reduce those costs. That assumes that people have a lot of money in their pockets to invest in their homes. That is faulty logic.

People will be well aware that in the last year, a few studies have been published. One poll showed that 60% of Canadians said that if they missed one paycheque, they would be in financial trouble. So they don't have a lot of manoeuvring room. One study showed that people's debt load was equivalent to 147% of their disposable income. They don't have a lot of room for making large investments to cut their electricity costs.

When you know those realities, then saying, "Okay, we'll charge you more to force you to make a big investment" shows itself as hollow.

If, on the other hand, you were to go to homeowners and say, "We will lease you a solar hot water heater to cut your electricity use by 50% or 60% for hot water," or "We will lease you geothermal heating. You'll pay us for the next 20 or 30 years. It will cut the cost of heating and cooling," then you'd have big uptake. But the government's gone around it backwards, thinking they could force people to make those big investments.

If you go back to the beginning of the modern electricity age at the beginning of the 20th century, you will see that governments did a lot to provide goods and services to get people connected into the electricity grid in the first place. We need to think in that same way if we're going to have a society that has renewable energy powering it. That isn't the thinking we have with this government. That's of consequence. Seniors are paying for that. You are paying for that. I am paying for that.

I want to say about energy conservation—because I have talked about it, and I want to talk about the government's failure in this regard. From time to time when I've raised this, I've had loud shouts from the other side that, "No, no, no. We, in fact, have a plan. We know what we're doing." I want to just take the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's document, *Rethinking Energy Conservation in Ontario*, talking about the realities of energy conservation in this province. A few years ago this government, the Liberal government, brought forward the integrated power supply plan, which had some targets for energy conservation. As I said earlier today, that whole plan was withdrawn a few years ago now. I understand it's to be reintroduced. For the last few years, we have not had a broad plan for electricity in Ontario. We've been operating under something called minister's directives. I have to say, they don't get reviewed by this Legislature, they don't get reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board, there is no environmental assessment, and frankly, there is no follow-up from the minister as well.

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Interestingly, what the Environmental Commissioner writes is, "The Ontario Power Authority responded to the first supply mix directive as requested and provided an integrated power supply plan to meet the government-established conservation target of 6,300 MW. The process to approve the integrated power supply plan was started by the Ontario Energy Board but suspended when the second supply mix directive was issued. It is not known whether the Ontario Power Authority responded to this second directive." That's interesting. The minister makes a directive about how you provide power and we don't know how his central planning body responded to it? It is one of those mysteries.

"Neither the Ontario Power Authority nor the minister has publicly provided information on the status of completion of the second supply mix directive." That's kind of curious, eh? Even the Environmental Commissioner can't find out what happens to a major directive from the Minister of Energy.

The Environmental Commissioner in his very discreet and diplomatic way says, "According to Ontario Power Authority-supplied information, the Environmental Commissioner believes that achievement of the directives and, by extension, government policy has been mixed and in some cases underwhelming."

He notes some of the directives. October 2005, the low-income directive: The Ontario Power Authority was directed to find 100 megawatts of savings for low-income and social housing. The outcome: Three megawatts were saved.

What's the other good one? The March 2006 residential and electrically heated homes directive: Zero megawatts of the 150 megawatts from conservation in the residential sector in electrically heated homes have been achieved. That's pretty clear, eh? Nothing happened—zero.

March 2006, commercial buildings and MUSH, municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals directive:

Zero megawatts of 150 megawatts in conservation in commercial buildings and in municipalities, universities, colleges, schools, hospitals have been achieved.

These are very substantial targets of which almost nothing was achieved, according to the Environmental Commissioner.

What he goes on to say, even more interestingly, is, "The minister has not enforced compliance where the Ontario Power Authority has not completed or made progress on transition directives within a reasonable timeframe." The minister says it. It's a directive. But if it's ignored, that's okay; that's not a problem. That is not the basis for actually running a multi-billion-dollar system that supports the lives of 13 million people and a very large economy. The minister directs, and if you feel like it, you can go along with the directive or not. I'm talking about the people who have been hired to implement his directive.

"There appears to be no specific mechanism for the minister to enforce directives." Wow. If people don't do what he says, if his machinery of state doesn't produce the results, there is no mechanism to actually make sure that it happens.

For a government to say that it's doing its best to make sure we have clean, green, reliable energy in Ontario and not have a plan, not have a mechanism for enforcing its directions, not achieve its goals, you have to say, in the end, that this is a government in disarray, and it is no surprise that our bills are as high as they are. It is no surprise that this bill today has been pressed into service to try and give the government some cover for the consequences of its actions that are coming home to Ontarians on a daily basis.

I want to speak very briefly about nuclear power and its costs. As you are well aware, the Darlington nuclear power plant was originally budgeted at around \$4 billion. It was started, I think, in 1980, roughly, and came into operation around 1990-91. The final cost: around \$13 billion.

This government is committed to keeping nuclear at 50%, 55% of our energy mix. Its budget for the new Darlington plant was \$6 billion. The only figure that has ever been publicly released for the actual bid that was put forward by AECL, Team CANDU, the only number that has been released for a bid that they were willing to accept—because, apparently, the bidder was able, or willing, to take on any overruns—was \$26 billion, which in fact is pretty much the same increase, four times the original estimate, as the original Darlington plant. If you multiply by four whatever estimate you get, you'll probably get the number you'll ultimately wind up with. That has real implications for us.

When the old Ontario Hydro was wound up, when Mike Harris thought, "We will sell off Hydro," they had to take away the stranded debt. They had to take away the debt that couldn't be covered by revenue from the system itself. Frankly, a plant whose initial cost is estimated at \$4 billion and that comes in at \$13 billion is going to have some costs that aren't going to be covered by the power it produces. So we now have on our

electricity bills the debt retirement charge, and these seniors who are going to get the benefit of this energy tax credit are paying that bill now. They are paying a bill that—and the debt retirement charge is equivalent to about 10% of their electricity, and there are other expenses that are buried in the rest of the bill.

When you actually look at the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.'s statements—and may you never have to, but if you're a real keener and want to, go look at them, because that debt retirement charge is only part of the money that's collected to deal with that leftover debt from that overinvestment in nuclear power. That's of consequence to people's power bills, and it's of consequence to their ability to stay in their homes, keep their lights on and keep themselves warm in the winter.

We have a government that has made fundamental mistakes about the direction of electricity policy, and in this bill and in others that will be before us soon, it is trying to deal with the turmoil that it has created.

It has a property tax credit. As you are well aware, there was a download that happened to municipalities in the 1990s that was never corrected by this government. That has meant that municipalities have had difficulty keeping up with their expenses and have put taxes—in Toronto, anyway—on people buying new licence plates, which, for people on fixed incomes who are trying to hold things together, was a red flag. I think it made a great contribution to the anger that was directed at the Miller regime in Toronto, when in fact the anger should have been with the provincial governments that downloaded, according to the numbers that I've heard, \$750 million to \$1 billion on the city of Toronto alone.

When people get angry at the costs of their municipality, they don't know that the income-tax-based revenue that comes into the province, that should pay for things like social housing and welfare, was in fact abandoned by the province and loaded onto the backs of municipalities.

You have the downloading that was not corrected, you have fundamental mistakes on electricity policy and then you have the HST put on top of all of that. It is no wonder that this government is scrambling for cover. It's pulling bills over top of its head every chance it gets. But as much as people will need these funds, I don't think that these funds will save the McGuinty government.

1700

I think I've outlined where the fault lines are with this government, the mistakes that it's made, the consequences that it has. What I hope is that someone in that government will stop making the fundamental mistakes that it has made that have cost the people of Ontario so much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mrs. Savoline assumes ballot number 61 and Mr. Hudak assumes ballot item number 68.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I was listening very carefully to the well-thought-out words from my friend and member from Toronto—a different part of Toronto than myself. The biggest issue here is the fact that this is not simply a phenomenon that's occurring in Ontario or in Canada; it's worldwide. If you watch some of the international news, you'll see that certain countries like Germany are phasing out nuclear power completely. Then you have other countries—I was reading about nuclear energy coming into France and Italy. There's a bit of a crisis right now—and the United States. Of course, we're closing our coal plants down and in the United States they're building coal plants and they're calling it "clean coal." It's kind of like saying "dry water." How do you have clean coal? It's kind of a difficult concept.

The key is that it all comes down to how to create energy. At the start of the statement that was made earlier, we talked about geothermal energy. Well, that's not something new. Just north of my riding, in Scarborough Centre, a federal building was built in the late 1970s that has an artesian well going deep underground and taking the heat out of the bottom of the ground, because it is hot. It brings it up during the wintertime to heat the whole building. It heats the building in the wintertime and then during the summertime it acts in the opposite effect. I don't know exactly how it works, but it's called a geothermal building. So it's been around for a while.

We have choices and decisions to make here. This government is committed to building an energy structure, a system that has a structure with it—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Toronto—Danforth is highly regarded in his commitment to the environment, so I wouldn't for a moment challenge his very sensible commitment to that goal. I think he would actually probably agree with some of the options that our side is putting up but I wouldn't want to put words in his mouth.

I just know that he did refer often to the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller—who the Liberal government tried to fire a few months ago—an independent officer of the Legislature. Mr. Miller is a person I have a lot of respect for. In fact, I would say that when he questions things, one should listen. They came up with this in the OPA report. I'm quite familiar with the report, too. It was a supply mix report and the phase 1 said that there's going to be a certain percentage of generation from certain sources. Phase 2 somehow got ignored, and it's troubling. Then all of a sudden they had the cabinet shuffle, George came in; bang, they slapped on the green energy bill, the feed-in tariffs. The members on the other side speaking there—nothing of the sort.

Germany and those countries are backing away. A lot of offshore wind—these are big issues that we would probably support. Right off your riding in Scarborough there's going to be some wind turbines. Tell your constituents the facts. That's the real truth here. What are you paying for it, what are you charging them for and

who's picking up the difference? Tell the people the facts: that you're doubling or tripling the price of energy. Tell the facts to the people. The argument here is about truth in government, not your particular approach to this: give everybody a 10% cut, try to hide the real price.

I think you should listen to the member from Toronto—Danforth, probably, out of respect—maybe don't respond, because you don't know near as much as he does. I think technically that is what's most important here, to listen to the facts of his argument. I can say this to you: If you tell the truth, you never get into trouble.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened, of course, to the member from Toronto—Danforth and what he had to say. You know, he has a pretty good analysis here based not only on the environment but also a pretty good analysis of the political and economic reality of what is going on here in Ontario.

This government has made bad decisions. There can be no doubt that this government has made bad decisions on its energy file. Whether it's the refurbishing of nuclear reactors, whether it's paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour for wind—the highest, I believe, in all of North America—or whether it is doing whatever it's doing, it has made really bad decisions.

Some people may say the whole decision around the smart meters has not been the smartest thing that was ever done, because the reality is that it's not saving ordinary people any money and is not really reducing the usage of electricity enough to offset the very real costs of those smart meters.

But here we have a bill, as he correctly points out, that is nothing more than a government paper-over. You are papering over the mistakes by saying, "Oh, we're going to come up with a few crumbs, a few extra dollars for people who are mostly going to be hit the hardest in Ontario," and you've centred in on seniors. There's no doubt it's going to help some seniors. There's no doubt that seniors are particularly vulnerable around this file and a whole bunch of other costs that they can no longer bear. It is no surprise that when the food banks reported a couple of days ago about increasing food bank usage as people get poorer and poorer in this province, the group that was affected the most, with a fourfold increase, were seniors. It's seniors who are increasingly, because they don't have money, being driven to the food banks. They have to pay their electricity bill. They have to do all these other things.

The government is very real, and they know they have created the problem. This is just a little, tiny Band-Aid over that problem that's going to—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes making comments on remarks from the member from Toronto—Danforth.

I just want to express my compliment to the member, because when he was first elected, I believe, in a by-election here, he had some strong environmental pieces

that he brought into this House, and I think that with respect to today's economy or our environment, we need to be more cognizant of those things.

As I listened to his debate, he spent a little bit of time talking about Bill 109, but I'm not sure that was the focus of his time. I think he sort of wandered off—the same with the member from Durham in the past—into no man's land.

As governments of any stripe have been in this place and they see issues where some assistance is needed—that's what governments are for: They are there to lend a helping hand. We went through one of the worst recessions probably in 80 years, and it's not just in Ontario; it's all over the world. We see the economic recovery in Ontario: a little slow, but it's far superior to our neighbours to the south.

The other question, and hopefully the member from Danforth would tell us in his reply—yes, that's what the opposition is there for, to critique the government of the day, to make sure they ask those important questions, and I support that, but I have not seen what—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough is interrupting his own member.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm not sure I've seen what their crystal ball says, how they're going to fix the issue. They don't like coal. They don't like nuclear. So I'm not sure I've seen their crystal ball.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto—Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you to the members from Scarborough Southwest, Durham, Beaches—East York and Northumberland—Quinte West for their commentary.

Member from Northumberland—Quinte West, I look forward, actually, to having further discussion on the electricity file with, I think, the next bill that we'll probably get in the next few days, but I'll say to you, and I think I've said it many times in this House, if you have an electricity strategy, the core of it has got to be efficiency and conservation. Frankly, you should be targeting a reduction in electricity consumption of around 40%. I can enlarge on that later, but this is a short time.

What Mr. Prue, from Beaches—East York, had to say was quite disturbing to me. I didn't realize that seniors were the largest group experiencing growth at food banks. That's disturbing but also consistent with things that I hear when I go out and talk to people in the community about their being hard pressed to hold things together.

I have to say, when governments act to help people, that is a good thing, but governments should not have done damage to people in the first place. That is what I was trying to set out in my speech; if I failed, my apologies to all who listened to it. I tried to make it very clear that the government created this crisis and is now trying to give itself cover.

That is very different from a government going in to intercede when there has been a natural disaster or an economic upheaval to which it contributed nothing and

of which it is trying to deal with the problems and make sure that people are protected. No, this government made fundamental decisions and mistakes that have harmed our economy and people's household incomes and is now trying to protect itself with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 109. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The government side is voting against one of their own bills.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That's not a point of order. Thank you for your input.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

There will be a 30-minute bell. Call in the members.

I have just received a motion of deferral dated November 22, 2010.

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the third reading vote on Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments—Minister Duncan—be deferred until Tuesday, November 23, 2010."

It is signed by Jeff Leal.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'll ask again: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

I declare the House is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1713.

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No. 72

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 23 November 2010

Mardi 23 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NARCOTICS SAFETY AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA SENSIBILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to address the Legislature this morning on the third reading of our government's proposed Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act.

I am absolutely convinced that this act, if passed, would save lives and protect individuals and families from the effects of the misuse of prescription narcotics and controlled substances.

At the same time, our goal with this proposed legislation is to restore the balance between providing appropriate pain treatment for those who need it, while preventing misuse, abuse and addiction. Our government took prompt action to address the misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics and other controlled substances with the introduction of this legislation.

Let me remind members of the serious crisis that is hurting families across Ontario and that has prompted our government to act.

Individuals, families, and indeed entire communities across Ontario have been devastated by this epidemic in the overuse of drugs containing oxycodone or other narcotics. These drugs can lead to addiction in the most unlikely people and in the most mundane of circumstances.

It's shocking, even shameful, for people and their families to discover that they are addicted to prescription painkillers.

People suffer from the stigma attached to drug addiction, the loss of self-esteem and self-reliance, and in the most extreme cases, the loss of family, friends and other community connections. Feeding their drug habit becomes the central focus of addicted people's lives, and some resort to crime to support their addiction.

Prescription narcotics have become a highly lucrative street drug, resulting in widespread diversion from legal use into trafficking by individuals and organized crime groups. That means more pharmacy robberies, more violence and more drug trafficking, with all its related negative effects on communities all across Ontario.

Overuse and misuse also means higher rates of addiction and admittance to treatment centres, where admissions have doubled between 2004 and 2008. This in turn places additional pressure on the province's 150 substance abuse treatment programs.

The abuse of prescription narcotics or painkillers has emerged as a public safety issue in jurisdictions around the world. These drugs are being overprescribed, they are being overused and they are being obtained illegally and sold on the street for profit while the people who buy them are getting sick and are dying.

Canada is one of the world's top per capita users of prescription narcotics, and in Canada, Ontario is regretfully at the very top of the list of narcotic use on a per capita basis. You've heard the statistics before, but they are worth repeating: Since 1991, prescriptions for medications containing oxycodone have risen by 900%; that's a ninefold increase over the level it was just a few years ago. The Ministry of Health spent \$156 million on 3.9 million prescriptions for narcotics for Ontario drug benefit program recipients alone in just one year, 2009-10. That's an average annual cost of \$260 per person taking narcotic painkillers. This equates to an average of over six prescriptions per person on these drugs, and that tells you that some individuals have a very high number of prescriptions indeed.

One of the groups most affected is First Nations. In fact, a majority of Ontario's First Nation communities, including the Chiefs of Ontario, has declared a state of emergency over the abuse of prescription narcotics, particularly drugs containing oxycodone. The Matawa Chiefs also express growing concern about the development of an underground economy, with drug dealers targeting their communities and with rising crime. But I don't want

to suggest that this is uniquely a First Nation problem. In reality, it's a rising problem everywhere in Ontario.

There is overwhelming agreement from all of our parties and stakeholders, including the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, on which I was pleased to serve, that there is a public health crisis around the misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics and that immediate action is required. When the select committee toured the province we dropped into all sorts of communities, but in particular we visited First Nation communities in northern Ontario and in eastern and southwestern Ontario. We heard the same thing wherever we went: that the misuse of prescription painkillers had become a huge problem. We also heard that in our more formal hearings in other communities throughout the province, and that was why, when the select committee made its recommendations, this is the only recommendation where we said, "Government, you must act immediately in terms of putting in place some sort of means of addressing this outbreak of addiction to prescription narcotics." Our government took immediate action, as asked, with the introduction of this proposed legislation along with the broader narcotics strategy.

A key element of the narcotics strategy is the development of our narcotics database, which will capture all prescription information for these drugs dispensed in Ontario. The support for the development of this database has been overwhelming. Right now, an individual can go to 20 different physicians, obtain 20 different prescriptions for narcotics, bill those prescriptions at 20 pharmacies, pay cash and no one will ever know. Well, the Ministry of Health needs to know. It needs to be able to monitor and analyze this information to inform educational initiatives and to identify patterns of inappropriate prescribing, dispensing and use. But most importantly, we need to be able to provide this information at the point of care, where patients are actually receiving health care.

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As a start, the database will inform the pharmacist. When the pharmacist goes to fill a narcotic prescription, they will actually be able to see whether there are a number of other outstanding prescriptions and whether there is abuse of the drug by this particular patient. Eventually, with additional technology in place, prescribers—that is, doctors, nurse practitioners, dentists, anyone who is authorized under the law to prescribe prescription narcotics—will also have access to the patient's profile so that they too can assess whether to prescribe these medications. So we'll be able to get the information to people at the point where they're making a decision about whether or not to prescribe. Obviously, if there's abuse, then we know that our health practitioners will choose not to prescribe but rather to find out how to intervene in the problem.

The database lays the necessary foundation to ensure the success of the whole strategy. If this legislation is passed, the ministry is expecting to completely enhance the database by summer of 2011.

Following second reading, Bill 101 was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. The committee received over 40 submissions, which identified the following key issues: the need for an appropriate balance between privacy protection and public safety; the need for a provincial chronic pain strategy; and increased access to treatment of addictions.

I'd like the members to note that the ministry already collects information on narcotic prescription for Ontario drug benefit or ODB recipients. At this point, we are obviously collecting the information for the purpose of paying the pharmacists who have dispensed the drugs. We are able to disclose this information to law enforcement agencies and regulatory colleges, as authorized under the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

The technology and privacy protections already exist in legislation, and the provisions of the proposed legislation would build upon those systems that are already in place. During committee, we heard from some stakeholders that there should be mandatory disclosure to regulatory colleges and law enforcement agencies in certain circumstances. But we also heard from other stakeholders that no disclosure should occur without a consultation process with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Our proposed legislation clearly outlines what information can be collected, to whom personal health information can be disclosed and under what circumstances. The act would extend the ministry's authority to cover all Ontarians rather than simply limiting it to ODB recipients, which is currently the case, for prescriptions for narcotics and controlled substances. The only disclosure provision in addition to what currently exists would be to prescribers, dispensers and operators of pharmacies.

Secondly, with respect to the chronic pain strategy, while there is no specific pain strategy embedded in the narcotics strategy, there are areas that relate to the treatment of chronic pain. For example, a key focus of the strategy is the development of education for health care professionals, which will include education on appropriate pain management and the appropriate use of narcotic painkillers.

The Narcotics Advisory Panel to the Ministry of Health has a long-term mandate to provide advice to government on optimal pain management; and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is working to establish a group of experts in the field of chronic pain, including physicians and other providers, to develop evidence-based recommendations for chronic pain management. This advice will inform a strategy to organize and deliver more effective treatment and management programs for those people who have chronic pain issues.

Considering all the submissions, we feel that we need to balance the issue of privacy of personal health information with the need to deal with the major public health crisis that is killing individuals and destroying families and communities across the province. We do not take this lightly, and with this proposed legislation I feel that we have struck the right balance.

The data is only part of our overall provincial narcotics strategy. We will also raise public awareness about safety, including youth education; we will incorporate more narcotic and pain management education into the medical school curriculum; and we will work to educate prescribers and pharmacists about the appropriate use and dispensing of prescription narcotics.

The broader strategy will also focus on treating patients with addiction, and investigating additional options for treating and supporting those addicted to prescription narcotics and controlled substances. The strategy will also develop educational workshops on the treatment of narcotics dependence and support the work with relevant partner treatment and addiction organizations and agencies, including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and ConnexOntario.

At the clause-by-clause reading on October 26, 2010, several amendments were made to the bill, as follows: Firstly, hospitals will be included within the narcotics database once the technology allows for it and a clear implementation strategy has been determined in consultation with hospitals. Again, we know from our conversations with the select committee that one of the points of abuse of narcotics is that sometimes people will shop emergency rooms looking for prescription painkillers, so it's important that we include hospitals in the information loop.

Secondly, the act would specify that the executive officer of the provincial drug program would co-operate with other organizations, specifically including regulatory colleges, to achieve the purposes of the act, if passed.

Finally, we made amendments providing authority for the minister and/or the executive officer to disclose information to prescribers at the point of prescribing, if the act is passed. I mentioned earlier how making sure that the prescriber has information about all the patient's narcotics prescriptions at the time they are making the decision to treat the patient is very important, so that the prescriber, i.e., the treating physician or the treating dentist, the treating nurse practitioner, understands the prescription narcotic history of the patient as they're making the decision around what sort of drugs to prescribe. The latter amendment allowing access to the prescription will therefore help to determine whether to prescribe a narcotic or controlled substance.

Originally, the bill only allowed for disclosure to a prescriber who had already prescribed a narcotic or controlled substance to the person, and we thought it made much more sense to allow physicians to see the information before they make that decision, when they can actually then choose more effective courses for managing pain.

Our government is focused on helping individuals, families and communities avoid in the first instance and recover from the effect of prescription drug misuse and abuse. As a government, we feel that we need to take strong action to turn the tide. That's what we're doing with this legislation and with our broader strategy. We

need the support of every member for our proposed Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act to make this happen, and I ask all three parties to support this proposed legislation in Bill 101.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I did listen with interest to the comments made by the member from Guelph with respect to Bill 101, and certainly we are intending to support this bill. But having said that, we have to recognize that this is only one small part of a very, very big problem.

Being a fellow member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, we did have the opportunity to visit many communities across Ontario that are really being ravaged by prescription drug abuse of oxycodone products, OxyContin and Percocet being subsets of that. We know that while the registry is really an important part of the process to be able to hopefully stop the process of double-doctoring and having people visit multiple physicians and multiple pharmacies to obtain these products, there are many more things that need to be done.

The select committee did take a very hard look at this particular issue. We urged the Minister of Health to act immediately, and we do thank her for her efforts in this respect, but there is a lot more that needs to be done in terms of treatment, in terms of giving people the opportunity to get themselves off these drugs. There are some law enforcement issues that need to be looked at. In terms of treatment, there's a lot more to be done to make sure that there's a basket of services in each community, because there are many parts of Ontario where detoxification programs and support programs simply aren't available. When you look particularly in the north, in some of our First Nations communities the situation is so bad that up to 70% of the population is suffering from prescription drug abuse. So we really need to concentrate our efforts and move on and start implementing other parts of the program in addition to this very worthwhile initiative.

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We look forward to working with the government on developing the response to this. It is something that is needed in all parts of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Certainly we agree with the premise of what we're trying to do, but allow me to take a few exceptions. When I hear my colleague talk about, "Anybody could go to 20 different doctors and then to 20 different pharmacies and nobody would know"—this, to me, who comes from northern Ontario, is like a speech from another planet. People in Sudbury and people in northern Ontario—35,000 of them don't have access to a primary care provider, a physician or a nurse practitioner. If you can get to see your primary care physician within a month or five weeks, you are lucky. This is a bill that has been brought together to help, basically, people in south-

ern Ontario and people in large urban areas deal with prescription use and abuse. It is not a bill that is conducive to helping the people in northern, rural, First Nations, remote communities.

I represent rural northern Ontario. We don't have 20 physicians, and we don't have 20 pharmacies. What the bill will be good at doing is something that is completely inappropriate for the people of the north, and this is something that I will go into more detail on later. The use and abuse of OxyContin and opioids has reached alarming rates in the regions that I represent, in First Nations, in rural Ontario, yet we are coming with a bill that has good intentions and good objectives but really works on only one tiny part of this. This is the putting together of a database that, frankly, is not going to help us a whole lot.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Today you've heard some very articulate comments from the member from Guelph, along with the members from Whitby-Oshawa and Nickel Belt. We all had the opportunity to serve on the select committee for mental health services in the province of Ontario. Bill 101 is a piece of the puzzle, a building block.

I particularly recall, as the member from Whitby-Oshawa just made note of, our visit to Sandy Lake, which is a very isolated First Nations community in northwestern Ontario, only accessible by air and water in the summertime and by ice roads in the wintertime. The chief and his band council went to great lengths to describe to us the very appalling situation where Percocet and OxyContin were smuggled into that community from Winnipeg. The chief went to great lengths to provide, as best they could, a screening process to try to reduce the flow of those two prescription drugs.

Certainly, there's no question that a lot more needs to be done. This is a start: an electronic database to collect, monitor and analyze information related to prescription narcotics and controlled substances.

While I'm on my feet today, I would really like to express our condolences to the Richardson family. Mr. Richardson played junior hockey for the Peterborough Petes. He just lost his daughter very tragically in the last couple of weeks as a result of a 14-year-old committing suicide. That's something we all heard about during our deliberations, and it goes to show you that all of us, all three parties in this chamber, have a solemn obligation to do what we can in this field.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a small comment on the opening address by the member for Guelph. I've listened to some of the responses and comments from some of the other members.

I just want to highlight one of the statements. The member for Nickel Belt mentioned that there have been some good intentions by this initial bill, Bill 101. However, there's such a larger picture that has yet to be tackled.

Certainly, mental health and addictions has been a topic of great interest in my riding. I have the Brockville

Mental Health Centre, which is being moved, for all intents and purposes, up to Ottawa, to the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, through that group.

In constituency week, I had a mental health seminar on October 15, on the Friday. I asked the member for Whitby-Oshawa and the member for Dufferin-Caledon, who were members from our caucus of that all-party committee, to come and speak. I was really impressed with the number of people from the mental health and addictions field and from the education field, and just interested members of the community, who came out that day to talk about the recommendations from the all-party committee.

I think some members of the public were a bit surprised when the two members from my caucus who were on that committee talked about the co-operation that we had between all members of this Legislature, of all parties, of every political stripe. I think that really changed the whole opportunity there.

What I'm trying to say is that we have so much more that we can do, and we're looking to the government on sort of the next plans and the next steps that they have as part of that report.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Guelph has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the members for Whitby-Oshawa, Nickel Belt, Peterborough and Leeds-Grenville for their comments.

Certainly, I want to recognize that the government understands that Bill 101 is just a piece, and that's why in my remarks I talked about the broader narcotics strategy, understanding that the response to the whole problem of addiction to prescription narcotics is much broader than simply tracking the use on a database.

We understand that we need to work with physicians, pharmacists, nurse practitioners and all those folks around the province who are health care providers on educating about best practice in terms of how we manage pain and what is appropriate use of prescription narcotics.

The reason that the database—the collection of and disclosure of data—is the item that is dealt with in Bill 101 is because that's the only part of the narcotics strategy where we actually require legislative change, where we require the legislative authority to collect the information about prescriptions for narcotics that are made for people other than those people who are on Ontario drug benefit. At the moment, we only collect, as a government, information about the prescriptions that we're going to pay for, for the people on the Ontario drug benefit, so we need the legal authority to go beyond what we're currently collecting. That's why the database focus in Bill 101.

Certainly, there's a whole lot of other things that need to be done, and we will do them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Before we continue, I'd like to recognize Dr. Bob Frankford, the former member for Scarborough East in the 35th Parliament. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to switch

the order of the leads, with the third party lead going ahead of the official opposition lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Agreed? Thank you.

Please continue.

0930

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As was mentioned, I was one of the members on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and we all know that bringing forward the quick action on the use and misuse of narcotics was one of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in its report. The ministry acted on that recommendation with this, Bill 101, and the previous member went to some length to explain what this bill is trying to do. I would like to spend the first part of my time talking about some of the issues that were not part of the bill, although, through committee, we tried to bring modifications to the bill and bring motions forward that were not in it. That continues, to this day, to bring me quite a bit of angst, as to, this bill has the potential to not do exactly what we wanted it to, plus to do some harm in the process.

The first thing that is really troublesome to me is the regulatory college/privacy issue. What do I mean by this? Well, the bill creates an unprecedented search and seizure provision that we have never seen in Ontario before. Ontario has colleges, so whether you are a physician, a dentist, a nurse practitioner or a physiotherapist, you belong to a college. Your college exists to protect the public and basically has the tools in place to investigate their members. This is how we have always done health professional investigations. Now, through this bill—as I say, the bill goes in the right direction. The bill has good intentions and good objectives. But through the bill, for reasons that are still unknown to me, we are creating those people, positions, who will be allowed to go into any physician's office, any dental office, any nurse practitioner—anybody who has the right to prescribe a narcotic, those new positions, those people will be allowed to go in. This is something worrisome to me. I don't understand why we didn't work through the college, why we had to put forward those new positions in a bill.

So those people will come into, let's say, a physician's office. They have the right to summon medical charts: patients' records. There is nothing in the bill that says how long those charts will be gone for and where they are going to take them. If things work like in some other areas of the ministry, it could take six weeks before we see them again. This has a direct impact on patient care, as those patients may very well go back to see their providers during that period of time. At the end of the day, the provider—my example was physicians—has to co-operate, but here, again, this has not been defined. Is a physician who is doing a procedure in an examination room, saying, "You'll have to wait a few minutes," going to be seen as not co-operative?

I can speak for physicians, nurse practitioners and dentists in northern Ontario: When you look at the stats,

we have one physician for 5,400 people. You look in the GTA and there's one physician for 350. Do you figure physicians in northern Ontario are busy? Absolutely. Their caseload is full. Their agendas are full. So if this person drops in at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and you have a waiting room full of people who have come from great distances to see that physician that day, and then you can't really give this bureaucrat enough time, are you going to be labelled as not co-operative, or are you going to tell the people who have travelled often over 100 kilometres, waited for five weeks to come and see you, "I'm sorry, you're have to come again. Your sick baby will have to wait"? This is very troublesome. Why didn't we work through the college? They have provisions in place. They have done this before. They have disciplined their members. They know how to do this in a way that brings results that are respectful of the clients that we're trying to serve. All of this was pushed aside. I don't understand why this was put into the law.

When I brought those issues forward during clause-by-clause, I got non-answers. This is something that is there. They modified it a wee bit, but this is something that will stay, and nobody can explain to me why we could not respect the college that was already there. We have self-regulation in Ontario. As far as I'm concerned, it works well. Why we didn't build upon this will continue to be a mystery to me.

The second piece that is really troublesome to me is that when the minister first introduced the bill, she talked about how they had worked at length with the privacy commissioner because, let's think about it, it is a serious issue of privacy. A medication that your doctor, your dentist or your nurse practitioner has prescribed to you will now be knowledge that the government will have access to. They will have access to who the prescriber—your physician—is, who you are, what medication you got, in what dosage, how many repeats. This is the type of information that currently is not shared with the government, but through this bill, because we're trying to do something good here and we're trying to get a hold of narcotic misuse and overuse, we are really looking into sharing private medical issues with the government in a way that we've never done before.

The minister stood up and told us that a lot of her work had to do with sitting down with the privacy commissioner to make sure that we have this right. I was really comforted by this. But then the privacy commissioner came and made a presentation and wrote a letter that more or less said completely the opposite: She still has serious concerns about the way this bill will impact the privacy of sensitive medical health information of Ontarians. So this level of comfort that I had—because that was one of the first things that came out of the minister's mouth when she talked about this bill, and then we have the privacy commissioner herself standing in front of committee and telling us pretty much the opposite, that she still has great concerns, and writing us a letter outlining those concerns in black and white. When we tried to bring forward motions to address this,

we were ruled out of order—anyway, it didn't work. So the concerns that the privacy commissioner had are still there.

We all agree that the problem of narcotic abuse is complex, that it requires a multi-pronged approach and that there is a pervasive concern regarding whether Bill 101 will be effective in doing what it sets out to do. So when I hear about the privacy commissioner, I'm worried, and those worries are still there; they have not been addressed. We've tried to make changes. Those changes did not go through. The privacy commissioner is somebody who knows a thing or two about privacy. I tend to respect her opinion. Here we have an opinion from a member that really goes against what the Minister of Health had told us, and that continues to be worrisome to me.

0940

We also have the idea that the bill, although it is really targeted at narcotics, includes other substances. Not only will we have a list of narcotics included in this database for which people will have to share the information with the government, but any other substances could be targeted and included in this act. This also makes me really worried. It makes me worried for many reasons. The first one is that we have one example here in Ontario, right here, right now, of a medication that has been proven effective in its own right but that comes with a whole series of bureaucratic rules. That's methadone. It is so complicated to prescribe methadone in Ontario that very few physicians bother with it at all. You really have to be dedicated to wanting to help the addicts get off of their addiction before you go through the process of prescribing methadone in the way that it has been bureaucratically managed.

Here, we are bringing about a substantive bureaucratic process that will oversee and govern the way narcotics are prescribed. But then the bill doesn't stop at narcotics; it includes other substances. Here again, I'm not sure I was ever given a good reason as to why we have to go beyond narcotics. I was also not given any good reason as to why some of the other substances had already been put in there.

If you want quality care, let health care providers use their clinical judgment to say the best way to achieve quality care for a given patient. To come with a whole bunch of pre-set rules is not any way to lead to quality care. At the end of the day, a good relationship between a primary care provider and their patient—show them the decency of respecting their skills at what they do and deciding what is in the best interests of that patient, given all of their knowledge, given all of the best practices that exist and given the facts of the real live person in front of them. This is how you achieve quality care.

I understand that because of the situation we are in with the misuse and abuse of narcotics, we had to do something, and I don't deny that. But to put in the act that other medications—"other substances," actually, is I think what they use—could be added to this act is troublesome to me.

Some medication, some substance that has fallen out of favour for one reason, that finds its way to the front page of the papers for all the wrong reasons that have nothing to do with quality care, nothing to do with good primary care practice, will suddenly find its way onto this new database, with very little we will be able to do about it. It's not going to come back and have an open debate in this House. It's going to be a complete change in regulations. The government will be able to—I agree that they will have to go through consultations, but, frankly, with a majority government, they never have to listen to any of those consultations. Sometimes, they set out to do something and it doesn't matter how many people raise their voices, how many concerns are brought forward. They just plow ahead and do whatever they want to do.

Here we have, in this bill, this provision that is troublesome to me. I have brought that forward during second reading, during clause-by-clause. I didn't get satisfaction on that and certainly was not able to move the government on that. Those are some of the concerns that I have.

Another huge area of concern—and these people were really, really vocal in coming and explaining to us what this would do—is the whole issue of chronic pain management. Narcotics are a treatment of choice for many with chronic pain. When they are used in the proper way and monitored in the proper way, they can do wonders. They can change people's lives. People who can't sleep, can't work, can't function anymore are given a second chance at life. They can sleep better; they can heal; they can work again; they can function. They can have happy, productive lives because their chronic pain is under control. We already know that when you add a layer of bureaucracy by adding this database, which we all say is there for a good reason, it will have an effect on people trying to seek control of their chronic pain.

I can speak to hundreds of calls that I took, when I was the executive director of the community health centre, from people who had gone through the traditional system of getting physiotherapy and trying to manage their pain. They had finally found the right combination of drugs and exercise and relaxation and acupuncture and all of this that worked, but one piece of that management was the prescription of a narcotic. Then they find themselves, like a million Ontarians, without access to primary care. They lose their family physician, they lose their link to a prescriber, so they depend on walk-ins, on emergency rooms, on anything they can find to get the same management that had worked well for them. But now nobody will prescribe narcotics to them. They go back into the hell that they were in before. That's no way to treat people with chronic pain.

First of all, why is it that Ontario doesn't have a chronic pain management strategy? Many other provinces in this country do, and it is effective and it works; but here we are bringing forward a bill that is squarely targeted at access. It will make access to narcotics a whole lot more difficult, for all of the good reasons that we've already stated, to look at misuse and abuse, but for

people who legitimately need access to those medications it will also make life hell. There is nothing in this bill that will help the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians—I think it's scheduled to be 2.4 million Ontarians—who deal with chronic pain. Not all of them use narcotics, but a good percentage of them do. We will make access for those 2.4 million Ontarians a whole lot more difficult, with nothing to counterbalance this. How do you balance this? You balance this by bringing forward a good strategy for pain management for Ontarians.

We had stellar deputations on this particular topic. Heads of departments came forward and talked to us about how we could have good chronic pain management in Ontario: "Here are some live examples that work, right here in Ontario"—most of them chronically underfunded, but they manage to pull it together anyway.

Here's how it works in other provinces. Here's how you bring the balance, because let's not kid ourselves: If your life is being overtaken by pain, you will do anything. You will self-treat, either at the LCBO or by street drugs. You will do whatever you can to control your pain. When good pain management is not available to you, doing nothing is not an option, because living with pain day in and day out is not living. Those people need help.

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Here we have a bill that will seriously decrease those people's already limited access to treatment, and we have nothing on the flipside to help them. Does anybody in Ontario ever think that because you don't have access to this drug that you are depending on, because the access is gone, your addiction will suddenly disappear? That because you don't have access to a medication that you're addicted to, problem solved, the addiction will go away? Absolutely not. When those people don't have access to those narcotics, their dependence will still be there. They will still be addicted and they will search. They will search like only an addict can search for the next hit, for the next time he can get his hands on that drug—his or her. What does that mean? That means that the demand for black market narcotics goes through the roof. That means that if there's another drug available, they will switch to another drug. But it doesn't mean that we have solved any problems; it just means that we have shifted it. We shift it to the underground; we shift it to the black market; we shift it to another type of substance or drug.

To be effective, all of those steps have to be done together. Not only do you have to decrease access, but you also have to provide treatment. Now, we already know that the 100-and-some—130, I think—addiction treatment programs all have huge waiting lists. I can speak to northern Ontario, where it will take you six months to get your first appointment to say, "Yes, you qualify," and about a year and a half before you will start your treatment, because of the wait-lists. And that depends on your age group and if you fit into the program and if you are a First Nation or—anyway, it doesn't matter who you are; the story is not going to be, we take away your supply of narcotics and we help you deal with your ad-

diction. It will be, we take away your supply of narcotics and we leave you there with no help for weeks and probably months—and for some of them, years—to fend for yourself with an addiction that is almost impossible to get out of by yourself. You will need help. You will succeed, but you will need help. Unfortunately, we're only doing the first part: We're taking away the supply, with nothing coming in to say that we will help the hundreds of thousands of people who presently live with an addiction. The reason why we are putting this forward is because we have so many people in Ontario addicted to those drugs that it has motivated the government to do something, yet we're taking away the supply and leaving you there to fend for yourself—not exactly what I had in mind.

Coming back to the people dealing with chronic pain, there's very little specialty training for pain management, so we have very few pain management specialists here in Ontario. Although health professionals try to do the best they can, very few of them are able to offer quality care best built on the evidence-informed decision-making that we want to see. The government does acknowledge this in their narcotics strategy announcement. They say that there is a need for additional education and collaboration between health professionals, but that's all. We have not yet heard anything about putting an emphasis on chronic pain management. I would say, go to Alberta, Nova Scotia or Quebec. They all have chronic pain management strategies. Their strategies are very similar. There are best practices developing out there. But not for Ontario. So people with chronic pain will stand to go through a really tough go when this bill comes into effect. I have no doubt that some physicians who are already very reluctant to prescribe those drugs will become even more reluctant, and people with chronic pain will be left with no help. We all know that this is the consequence of this bill. Why aren't we more proactive in saying, yes, we know this is there; yes, we realize that chronic pain management is the way to solve this; and, yes, we will do something about it, like those witnesses, so many of them, came and told us? But, no, none of this is being done.

The CPSO, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, has done a very good report. It's called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance: Tackling the Opioid Public Health Crisis*. In their report, they make 31 recommendations. They talk about the need for a comprehensive strategy that deals not only with supply and access but also deals with the patients. They also deal with what that will mean for the people of Ontario—what does that mean for chronic pain? What does that mean for people who have addiction, and how do we deal with this—looking into every facet of the program. It's very well done, and I want to congratulate the College of Physicians and Surgeons for putting forward that public health paper.

Unfortunately, we are only looking at this tiny little piece of it. We're looking at this database; we're looking at the supply side; and the rest of it more or less falls apart.

As was mentioned, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions spent quite a bit of time looking at addictions services. In our report, *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*—we travelled for 18 months. We held 30 days of hearings; 230 presenters came, and we read 300 submissions.

We know that the province has 150 service providers for addictions services, but in spite of this, we still have so many Ontarians who cannot gain access. This is all documented in our document; this is all documented in the College of Physicians and Surgeons document; and this is all being completely ignored by this government as they move forward with Bill 101. We did try to be heard. People came and presented, but very few of the recommendations that were made for change were acted upon, and even fewer of them were accepted.

There are some huge variances from region to region in Ontario. Some of them are desperate, but none of them are doing very well, so the idea that we could re-shift resources is a non-starter. There are no areas in the province where people with an addiction can get the help they need, right here, right now, in a way that is close to their home, that is conducive to supporting them in their recovery. Some of them try. Some of them do a very good job with the resources that they have. But they all have long waiting lists.

I also want to talk about health professionals' education. A rather interesting fact that was presented to us shows that physicians receive an average of 16 hours of pain education. Physicians who have gone through the standard training in one of the recognized faculties of medicine in Ontario will have received 16 hours of pain education. That doesn't seem like much if you compare this to the 87 hours that the veterinarian students get. I take it that managing pain within animals is more important than managing pain within people—this despite the fact that any GP, any nurse practitioner will tell you that one of the main reasons people come to see them is pain. If you go to the dentist, who also has the right to prescribe, and ask them how many of their clients have come because they have pain, the statistic goes through the roof. People unfortunately don't always go to the dentist when they should; they go to the dentist when they can't stand the pain anymore. So although people do go and seek help because of pain, there's very little that is being taught.

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"Since the early 1990s, family physicians have been inundated with materials and information from pharmaceutical companies about the value of using opioids for ... effective pain management. This education was largely focused on the potential benefits" of those drugs "and failed to include education about the potential risks, including misuse, addiction and diversion. There was also little attention paid to the importance of appropriate goal-setting, screening, monitoring for safety and effectiveness and protocols for tapering or discontinuing opioids. As a result of issues stemming from misprescrib-

ing and other problems, some"—and I would say many—"physicians have stopped prescribing opioids" altogether for chronic pain or for any other reason. "This has resulted in some patients being undertreated while other physicians continue to prescribe inappropriately.

"Education, based on the best available evidence, delivered from non-commercial sources"—so not from the pharmaceutical industry—"is paramount in helping all health professionals deal effectively with chronic non-cancer pain, including the effective and safe use of opioid medication."

Chronic pain management needs to be approached in the same way that chronic disease management is: long-term planning and goal-setting. Primary care providers need the educational training, and they also need access to retraining, to determine whether opioids are appropriate, so that they can screen for the risk of misuse and set realistic goals in collaboration with their patients.

Currently, there is no comprehensive continuing education system for health care providers in Ontario, and it's estimated that 50% of that is delivered by pharmaceutical companies. The CPSO and other colleges are working to develop standards of ongoing education, but they need the government's support. So far, this support has not been forthcoming.

I want to talk a little bit about the technology. I'm conscious that I have 10 minutes left, and I still have lots that I want to say. Let me see if I'm going to jump over this or go directly to—no, I'm going to stick with technology.

Bill 101 is a good first step—nobody will deny this—when it comes to narcotics tracking. When this legislation passes, it will mean that the Ministry of Health can collect prescribing and dispensing data for every patient in Ontario when it comes to narcotics and other controlled substances. You have to realize that this is not a comprehensive drug-tracking system. It will not allow health professionals to access information in real time. Remember the example that my colleague gave you? She used 20 different prescribers and 20 different pharmacies. People in northern Ontario drool over those numbers, but I take it that in other areas of the province, it is feasible.

Those physicians who are confronted with that patient still won't have this information in real time. So you may be physician number 20. This patient might have been going to 19 other physicians before you, and you are number 20, but you won't know this. You don't know this now and you won't know this after the bill has come forward either. It's not going to be accessible in real time to people who prescribe. However, it is supposed to send out alerts to health providers if they are concerned with the prescribing or dispensing pattern for a patient.

Health providers all speak about the dire need to have a full system of drug information for Ontario that would allow physicians, nurses and dentists etc., as well as pharmacists, to make full, informed decisions. You can't help but think that if that \$1 billion had been spent at eHealth in a different way, we could be in a very different spot right now. We could have a functioning electronic health record that would have a drug management

system built in that would already be there for practitioners in Ontario and for patients to use. But we're not there and, sadly, we're nowhere near there. We will have this database that will collect specific information about specific controlled drugs for specific reasons, and that won't be available in real time. A step in the right direction, absolutely. Is it the tool that we really need to make informed decisions that lead to quality care? I'll leave it up to you, but my opinion is that we're still far away from this. With the system proposed in Bill 101, health providers will continue to have only a partial view of their patients. How can health professionals make well-informed decisions when they only have a small piece of the information that they need?

The government has been totally silent on the standard they will be using to measure the success of Bill 101. This is something, again, that we heard lots about. How do you know that this will be effective? How do you know that you will have an impact on society if you don't set out evaluation criteria? This is an important step. This is not party politics. When you put something out, when you set out to do something, you should also set out to do how you will measure success, so that you can show success, or if you don't, so that you can take remedies. We didn't see any of this in Bill 1001; although we asked that it be put in there, we were not successful.

There's also a significant concern that this will become a numbers game rather than ensuring excellent health care for all. I've talked about this a bit, where I say that if you have an addiction and all of a sudden you don't have access to it, you will continue to have an addiction. Whether you have an addiction to OxyContin or you have an addiction to another street drug, you still have an addiction, with all of the societal problems that come with this. I don't want this to be a numbers game. I want this to be something that will help the people of Ontario lead better lives. I want this to be something that will improve the quality of the care that is delivered to the people of Ontario, whether you have chronic pain or you're dealing with an addiction.

Let's measure what we do and make sure that we don't embark into a numbers game where, "Oh, the number of prescriptions of narcotics has decreased." That could sound good. I could see this on the headline, you know: "Narcotic Prescriptions Go Down 60%." That would make a good headline. But that means nothing if you don't look at, what does it mean on the ground? Does that just mean that people have gone to other drugs? People have gone to the black market? People are dealing with addiction at the LCBO? You have to measure it so that we don't play a numbers game on an issue that is as important as what we're trying to deal with with Bill 101.

We can all see how primary care providers and pharmacists will be reluctant to prescribe and dispense narcotics, and the effect that will have. We already know that many providers are already reluctant to provide access to these drugs, but we cannot forget how important good pain management and good medication management are. Bill 101 is a step forward, but it is only one step when many, many more are needed.

The government announced the narcotics strategy with five elements. But we only see the details of one of these elements in this bill. As I said, the CPSO report has 31 recommendations. Only one of them is dealt with in Bill 101. This is a small piece of the puzzle. What's next? How is the government planning to move forward with a seamless system that ensures high-quality health care for Ontarians and a real safety net and basket of treatment services for Ontarians facing addictions? I would say that the answer to this is obvious to me: Implement the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions report, and we would have this. We could move forward, safely knowing that people are being looked after and that things will improve.

Why did the government choose to ignore the voices of so many communities when they rejected the idea of the committee travelling? I have said to you that when I hear people talk about 20 providers and 20 pharmacists, this is kind of disrespectful to the people in the north, in rural areas and in First Nations. This bill is really set for—you have a prescriber, you have a pharmacy, and you have a database. Well, in parts of the province that I represent, we have prescribers that are also dispensers. How is this going to work for them? In parts of the province that I represent, we have primary care models that don't look anything like what you have here in downtown Toronto. This bill is not made for all of Ontario. It is made for the masses, and it will help people in large urban areas, without a doubt. But I would have liked it to be inclusive of everybody in Ontario. I would have liked it to be inclusive of the people I represent in rural northern Ontario, and it is not. But I guess it will help some.

We wanted to go to the north. I wanted people in the committee to listen in and hear about those models and also hear their ideas about how they can help. But they refused to travel. We did not go to the north, and nobody from the north was heard when we had the public consultations; not one voice from the north was ever heard on Bill 101, I guess, except mine. But there are a lot of people who have a lot more to say, people who have lived experience on the ground, who also have good ideas and strategies as to how we can help this problem, but they were never given an opportunity to be heard. We never did travel to the north, we didn't travel to First Nations, we did not travel to remote areas, and we didn't travel to rural Ontario.

I mentioned privacy issues. Are Ontarians satisfied with the complex privacy issues that have been brought forward? I know our commissioner still has questions. Will the regulatory college and health professionals be assured that this will be a seamless system that prioritizes excellence in patient care? How come we are at third reading and we still have so many large questions unanswered, like, shouldn't we have dealt with this during first, second, public and clause-by-clause? How come all of those questions are still there for us to grapple with at third reading where, frankly, the chances of changing anything become slimmer and slimmer all the time?

This bill was a huge opportunity to provide a definitive direction forward, yet there are far too many wasted opportunities and far too many questions and answers. What a shame.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has come to the point where we now need to adjourn until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(c), the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has filed notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. The order for second reading of Bill 135 may therefore not be called today.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming to the House today Jean-Luc Pullano and his fellow students at Holy Spirit Catholic school in Aurora and their teacher, Ms. Margaret Prince.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today Wayne Hanley, the national president of the UFCW, as well as Bob Linton of UFCW National.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It's my pleasure to rise today to welcome to the Ontario Legislature the parents of our page captain, Mr. Connor Wood. I'm very pleased about this because he's from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. His parents, Susan and Dave Wood, are here today, and I would like to welcome them to the Legislature.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to introduce to Queen's Park today one of my employees, Alexandra Ainley from my Alliston constituency office.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'd like to introduce an organization from my riding with students from all over the world, the Parkdale Intercultural Association, to the House this morning.

Hon. John Milloy: I know all members of the Legislature would like to introduce all the representatives from Ontario's college system who are visiting Queen's Park today—and a reminder of the College Ontario reception in rooms 228 and 230 today from 5 to 7. We welcome all those representatives here.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to introduce to the House my friend Louise Edmonds from Pembroke, Ontario. She's a lecturer at Algonquin College and the University of Ottawa. She did a lot of work with us on our long-term-care strategy and plan, and I'm delighted that she's here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Oshawa and

page Kyle Fitzgerald to welcome his mother, Roxanne Fitzgerald, to the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us today in the members' gallery Mr. Brian Charlton, who represented Hamilton Mountain in the 31st to the 35th Parliaments. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

As well, we'd like to welcome Bob Frankford, who represented Scarborough East in the 35th Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. The Premier's wage restraint plan has gone badly off the rails, and they seem to have no plan to get it back on track. Premier, you said that this was key to finally achieving a balanced budget, that you would lead by example. So let's test this out: Premier, how many deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and directors in the Ontario public service are paid more than the maximum that your government set for their positions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm always prepared to engage my honourable colleague in a discussion about the importance of respecting taxpayer dollars. I know that he's going to want to do that in a way that demonstrates respect as well for all of our partners who work with us as we deliver public services that are so important to Ontario families.

I'll remind my honourable colleague as well that we have the second-lowest per capita spending in Canada as a province, which I think speaks to our commitment to fiscal responsibility.

I'll remind my honourable colleague as well that in comparison to the previous government, the use of consultants is down dramatically, travel expenses are down 23% and government advertising spending is down 20%. That's, again, in comparison to 2003. I think that's significant and it speaks to our continuing commitment to fiscal responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the problem with your leadership, frankly, is that you set rules, you ignore the rules and then there are absolutely no consequences. You, yourself, have set caps for deputy ministers at \$220,000 a year, ADMs at \$168,000 a year and directors at \$131,000 a year. According to salary information obtained by the PC caucus, Premier, 367 senior bureaucrats in the OPS are paid more than the maximum cap that you yourself set. You even have one ministry, the Ministry of Government Services under Minister Takhar, that for some reason has three deputy ministers.

Premier, how can you ask Ontario families to pay more and live with less when you have blown past your own salary caps on 367 different occasions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are pleased to release to the public all that information, and the member opposite has done that.

We have some 67,000 people employed in the Ontario public service, which is about the level it was at in 2003 when we took office. We have, as the Premier pointed out, reduced the level of consultants year in and year out. Interestingly, though, when the Leader of the Opposition was in government, what they did was they fired civil servants, then hired them back as consultants and paid them more money. I remember that very clearly.

Then they hid Hydro One and OPG from public scrutiny. When we opened it up to public scrutiny, we saw a long list of Conservative operatives who worked for the Premier, who did all kinds of things, being paid excessive—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's unfortunate that the Premier did not respond to my question, because, Premier, leadership starts at the top.

Premier, these are the caps that you yourself set for senior bureaucrats and you've blown by them on 367 occasions. Let me give you one example: You have one assistant deputy minister, Ken Deane, who is paid almost half a million dollars per year; almost three times the cap for his position. Ironically, Mr. Deane is the ADM for health system accountability and performance. This means that Mr. Deane oversees eHealth Ontario, and he himself is a former board member at eHealth Ontario. eHealth, Premier, was not exactly a shining light in your administration, to say the least. Meanwhile, Ontario families who are playing by the rules and paying the bills wait up to 21 hours in emergency rooms in our province.

Premier, how can you explain this kind of bloat?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Of the roughly 67,000 employees of the Ontario public service—and let me, by the way, speak about the quality of our public service and the integrity of the people in the public service, those people who make their living delivering the best services we can ask for. By the way, the case he cited was less than they paid Paul Rhodes when he was a hidden consultant for Hydro One. It's less than they paid Gord Haugh when he worked for the Minister of Health at the time as a short-term consultant.

That member and his party want to disparage the very people who work hard on behalf of us. We won't engage in that game. We will continue to implement thoughtful policies that respect the taxpayer, unlike that member and his party, who abused the public purse, hid it from the public and then tried to advertise that they weren't doing it.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me try the Premier again, because leadership should start at the top. Premier, the problem is that your answer to your spending restraint

problem—when you're trying to dig us out of holes you've already dug us into, your problem is you keep digging it deeper and deeper. How can anyone take you seriously in public sector collective agreements when you've blown past your own maximum caps on 367 different occasions? How can anyone take you seriously when one of your ministers, Minister Takhar, has three deputy ministers of his own? Premier, you simply cannot achieve the wage freeze you promised because you lack absolutely any credibility on keeping spending in line or keeping your promises.

Premier, isn't your problem in your collective bargaining negotiations that, quite frankly, nobody takes you seriously?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.
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Hon. Dwight Duncan: When we set about to restrain wages in the public and broader public sectors, we rejected the approach of a social contract. We rejected the approach of the previous government, which was to demonize public servants, to misstate facts about the important work that they do for us.

We have engaged in a process that is reported out in the fall statement. I'll remind the member opposite of this: There have been some 40 public sector agreements reached since the budget. Four of them were arbitrated above the requests that we had—I felt those decisions and the language around them were not appropriate. But what the member forgot to tell people was that half of those agreements have achieved zero and zero. The average rate of settlement in Ontario is now below that of Canada, below that of our municipalities and below the public sector. We will continue to work with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, I've asked the Premier now four questions on a very serious topic, about how he has allowed, on 367 different occasions, to blow by the maximum caps he'd set on senior civil servants. Premier, this also undermines your credibility, quite frankly, when it comes to achieving collective bargaining agreements that you promised would be zero and zero. Your finance minister is now boasting that half the settlements since the budget were tabled at zero and zero—which means half have not.

Your plan has gone completely off the rails. May I ask you at least this today, Premier? Will you table the collective agreement results to date to back up your finance minister's claim—because we are not sure it's in keeping with the facts—and then will you tell us how you'll find the savings for those who have not agreed to zero and zero?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We reject the tactic of that leader and his party. We're not going to call nurses hula hoop workers. We are not going to fire meat inspectors. We are not going to fire water inspectors. The member opposite would have the people believe that there are easy, quick fixes to these challenges. We have chosen a thoughtful approach that is bearing results. These are

always difficult issues, particularly when dealing with the broader public sector. We will continue to work both with management and unions in the broader public sector in an appropriate fashion, with respect for everyone involved.

I'm proud of the fact that our average rate of settlement is now well below that of the federal government, who simply gave up on anything. We'll continue to work with them. I have confidence in our partners in the broader public sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Maybe I'll try my luck one last time. To the Premier, to whom I've addressed these questions—because, Premier, I'd expect that you would give direction as leader of the government and Premier of the province on very serious issues.

Media reported that six public sector unions have ignored your hopeful rhetoric to cross your fingers, hope to achieve wage freezes at zero and zero and then spare Ontario families more McGuinty cuts to health care or education. Media reports go on to show that arbitrators continue to thumb their noses at your government because they don't take you seriously. Your wage freeze plan has gone badly off the rails and the only savings you seem to achieve are on the backs of non-unionized public sector workers, setting up an unlevel playing field.

Premier, in how many unreported collective bargaining agreements have arbitrators awarded wage increases? What is the total cost of your fiscal plan? When will you get your plan back—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government is looking for fairness for taxpayers while that member and his party are looking for a fight. We don't want to go back to the days of 26 million student days lost as a result of strikes.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I wish they would have brought the same degree of passion to Hydro One and OPG in their years of administration. I just want to remind the people of Ontario that Mike Harris, the former Tory Premier, received \$20,000 in consulting fees from Hydro One, unreported and hidden from the public. Paul Rhodes collected \$1,074,000 during PC rule through unpublished contracts with Ontario Hydro, published with environment—that was on the Walkerton case, I might add—published with the Ministry of Health and LCBO—untendered contracts. Tom Long's firm collected \$3.1 million in unpublished contracts and hidden—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Later today, the McGuinty government will unveil a new

energy plan. Can the Premier tell us what happened to the last energy plan that his government produced?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the attempted levity, but I think my honourable colleague understands that a few years back, we passed a law that requires that we have in place a long-term energy plan. There was no such law that existed before. We think that was an important step forward. We further required that that same plan be updated every three years as new technologies evolve and as we gain a better understanding of the future and the need for supply and those kinds of things.

I know that my honourable colleague, in fact, does understand that what we're doing is updating a plan. It's a long-term plan. It will speak to our continuing commitment as a government, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to ensure that there is a reliable supply of clean electricity. More than just that, it will at the same time lay the foundation for a new clean energy industry with new clean energy jobs right here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families want affordable, reliable, clean electricity, and for seven long years, they've suffered as this government has lurched from plan to plan.

They promised to freeze rates and then let them climb by 75%. They promised to make conservation easier, and then they slapped a new sales tax on energy-efficient appliances. We're now approaching the eighth anniversary of a solemn promise to close coal plants within four years.

After seven long years of government bungling, why should people take today's energy plan seriously?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the things that Ontarians will be entitled to ask—particularly after the Minister of Energy puts out the latest revision, the third three-year revision to our long-term energy plan—will be, where are the plans from the opposition parties?

We're going to make it perfectly clear as to where we stand. We stand, in particular, for clean energy. We're shutting down our coal-fired generation—not as quickly as anybody would like, but we're moving as quickly as we can responsibly do so.

We're investing in a new industry. We're creating thousands of new jobs. More than just ensuring that we're providing Ontarians with clean, renewable energy, we're also laying a foundation for a manufacturing centre to meet North American needs. We're number one in North America in the auto sector. We want to be a North American leader as well when it comes to the manufacture and sale of new renewable technologies. That's all part and parcel of a smart, responsible plan. Again, I ask, on behalf of Ontarians, because they'd like to compare, where's their plan, and where's their plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government's energy policy is written on an Etch A Sketch: You never know when they're going to shake it and start all over again.

Last month, the unfair sales tax on hydro bills was absolutely necessary. This month, it needs to be rebated back. Last week, the government had time-of-use billing just right; it was perfect. This week, it's changing again. When will the government be shaking the Etch A Sketch on today's plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the leader of the NDP is eagerly putting together her long-term energy plan. We will have ours out, again, this afternoon. We speak to our commitment to ensure that we have in place a clean, reliable, modern electricity system.

We talked about some of the specific supports that we're putting in place for families, whether it's our energy and property tax credit or whether it's taking 10% off their monthly electricity bill for the coming five years. There will be more assistance included in this afternoon's announcement.

We've got all of our plan out there in terms of costs, priorities, commitments and a vision. Again, at some point in time, it seems to me it becomes incumbent upon the opposition parties to put forward their alternative. Talk is cheap; investing in electricity over the long term is not. So, on behalf of Ontarians, I would ask the opposition parties to put out their plans so we can all take a look at them.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. From more than a billion dollars on not-so-smart meters to sweetheart private power deals, this government has bungled the energy file.

Families are now wondering what's in store for them today. Published reports indicate it's a nuclear-filled future, this despite study after study showing Ontario doesn't need to have half of its power generated by nuclear energy. There are far less expensive options available. When will this government finally realize that nuclear energy is nothing more than a giant financial sinkhole?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I've come to understand what it is that the leader of the NDP doesn't want. She doesn't want us to invest in renewable electricity because that's too expensive—but the fact that they were, and apparently remain, committed to shutting down coal is of no relevance in that particular matter. She also tells us that she doesn't like emissions-free nuclear generation in the province of Ontario, which at present generates 50% of all of our electricity.

So she doesn't like nuclear; she doesn't like renewables. I assume she doesn't like gas. She doesn't want us to open up any new hydroelectric capacity in northern Ontario because that might cause some damage to the environment.

We've got our plan out, and we've got our costs out. We've been very clear; we're upfront. So, again, I ask on behalf of the people of Ontario: Where do they stand, where is their plan, and what are their costs going to be?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order.

Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government likes to talk about a commitment to clean, affordable power, but they're about to dump tens of billions more dollars into expensive nuclear power, while making very, very little effort at all on conservation measures in this province. Will we see a plan to help families who want to make responsible energy choices and cut their bills, or will they just be asked to pay more and more for new nuclear power?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says that she's in favour of more jobs for Ontario families. Does she really understand how many jobs are tied up in the nuclear sector in the province of Ontario? I think there are at least 25,000 jobs. Those are good, high-paying, clean-technology jobs.

The fact of the matter is, at some point in time, the opposition party is going to have to come clean. They're going to have to tell the people of Ontario what they're going to do about a very important matter of public policy. What are they going to do to ensure that we keep the lights on? That's not just an important matter for us in our homes; it's important to our schools, it's important to our hospitals, and it's important to our businesses. It's the very foundation of our wealth creation in the province of Ontario.

We have put forward a very specific, responsible, solid plan. We've been very upfront with the details—the costs, where we're going, why we're doing it—and we're committed to it.

What I'm saying now on behalf of the people of Ontario is, it's time for them to come out of their shells. It's time for them to tell us what exactly they are going to do to ensure that we have a clean, modern, reliable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People want to make responsible energy choices, but at every turn, those choices get more and more expensive. They were told the smart meters would help them save money and electricity; instead, they raised prices and didn't reduce consumption. They were encouraged to invest in energy-efficient appliances, but this summer the government slammed an unfair sales tax on them. When will this government start helping people save money and energy instead of making it harder to do both?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important to be clear to people who work in manufacturing, and in particular, in the nuclear industry, exactly where the NDP stand on what they say will be their views on the energy plan that will come out. We want to know.

We know full well that there are 70,000 jobs in the nuclear industry. The lion's share of those are in the

province of Ontario. Those are jobs from coast to coast to coast that rely on governments of Ontario providing 50% of the base.

I ask the NDP, where do they think the power is going to come from to fire up our industry, knowing full well that Ontario has the greatest cluster of industry in the country? We want to know what you're going to tell those manufacturers, if you wouldn't move forward with refurbishment of Darlington, if you wouldn't move forward with new builds in nuclear. We want to know where the NDP stands on good-paying jobs that would support a nuclear cluster that is the best cluster in North America. Where—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier McGuinty is out of touch with Ontario families who cannot afford his expensive energy experiments. While former minister George Smitherman said that Ontario families would pay only 1% per year for his Green Energy Act projects, the Premier's own numbers show they will pay 56% more for sweetheart deals he is making with foreign multinationals. Take, for example, his sweetheart deal with IKEA: IKEA will receive almost \$700,000 a year for power that retails for \$115,000 on the retail market.

Why can't the Premier understand that Ontario families who struggle with their hydro bills cannot afford to pay six to seven times more for his sweetheart energy deals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. One of the things that the latest revision of our long-term energy plan will demonstrate this afternoon is that there's a limit in terms of how far we envision going with respect to the makeup of renewable energy inside the entire complement, which I think is the responsible thing to do.

But this is really important, and I think this is the crux of it. We're committed to shutting down coal in Ontario; they're not. We're committed to clean air; they're not. We're committed to reducing deaths, illnesses, hospitalizations and respiratory ailments; they're not. That's a fundamental difference. There, Ontarians can be very clear in terms of the contrast. We're shutting down coal; they want to keep burning coal. I think Ontarians are going to want to keep that in mind.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier McGuinty's massive sweetheart subsidies to a foreign multinational have spawned more sweetheart deals with more foreign companies. IKEA says that it will produce enough power to light 100 homes. Under the feed-in tariff rates that you set, IKEA will receive over 71 cents for each kilowatt hour it produces. That works out to almost \$6,800 a year for each of those 100 homes—well over the \$1,500 average for families in the GTA. What makes you think

that Ontario families can afford to pay \$5,000 more per year for power—\$5,000 more than it costs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's an interesting fantasy, but I think facts are always more important.

It's interesting that there's a theme that the official opposition continues to weave more broadly through its policies. They're against all things foreign. They never reference Samsung unless they talk about it being a foreign company. They're not comfortable with the notion of foreign students studying in the province of Ontario. I don't know why they're afraid of the rest of the world, but we're not. We're open to the rest of the world. We're open to new investment in our province. We're open to new students coming here. We're open to new ideas. We're open to new wealth creation.

Let them be afraid of the world. Let them sink into the past. We're for moving ahead. We're open to a new Ontario. We're optimistic. We're eager to embrace the world. We're going to build a stronger province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

New question.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: For the Premier: The Pembina Institute says that replacing the Pickering B nuclear plant at the end of its life with renewable energy would cost up to 48% less than replacing it with a new nuclear reactor at Darlington. Investing in energy efficiency, cogeneration and even hydro imports from Quebec can meet Ontario's electricity needs for less than the cost of rebuilding the Darlington nuclear plant.

Ontarians are already struggling to pay rising hydro bills. Why won't the government invest in lower-cost alternatives to new nuclear power?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, here we are. This is the NDP, and at some point you no longer enjoy the luxury of offering criticism from the comfort, security and convenience of the sidelines. At some point in time, you've got to get into the game and you've got to declare yourself as to what are you in favour of.

I just want to revisit it. They're against nuclear even though that generates 50% of all of our electricity today. They're against clean energy because they say it's too expensive. That implicitly means that they're against shutting down coal, which means they're in favour of keeping coal open, which means they're in favour of more smog days, they're in favour of deaths and illnesses that are connected with the burning of coal in the province of Ontario. That's what they're in favour of.

If they've got something different, if they've got a different plan, then let's hear it. Let's put it on the table. We put ours on the table, our costs on the table, our specifics on the table. Let's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East.

Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ontarians want clean energy and they want affordable energy. Nuclear power is neither clean nor affordable. The cost of building nuclear reactors is doubling while renewable energy costs are projected to fall. Why is the government locking Ontario into decades of new nuclear cost overruns without publicly exploring cleaner and more cost-effective alternatives?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is no more aggressive jurisdiction in all of North America when it comes to building renewable energy than right here in Ontario. Every day they stand up and they say they don't like it; they say it's too expensive. We have at least 40 different energy conservation programs in place right now that we continue to fund. Now they're telling us that in addition to not liking renewables because they're too expensive—even though that means we can shut down our coal plants, even though that means we have cleaner air and fewer smog days, even though it means we're creating a new industry with new jobs—they don't like nuclear.

They can't have it all ways. There is no magic when it comes to putting in place a clean, modern, reliable electricity system. It's hard work. You've got to make decisions. You've got to act responsibly. That's what we continue to do, and we'll keep doing that every single day on behalf of Ontario families.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Constituents in the great riding of Mississauga South want to help protect the air we breathe. They know they can do their part by taking transit, carpooling, biking or walking instead of driving.

As you know, Minister, the Southwest Greater Toronto Area Air Quality Task Force, chaired by Dr. Balsillie, completed their report over the summer. We're fortunate that so many in the community were engaged throughout this process and continue to work to reduce our local emissions. But they also want to see our government continue its leadership in developing policies that conserve energy and reduce emissions. They want action to make sure their children have cleaner air. Minister, my constituents want to know, with much of the energy discussion focused on costs, is conservation still a government priority to protect the air we breathe?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to my friend, absolutely. The simplest thing that we can do and the least expensive thing that we can do is to conserve electricity. If we don't need it in the first place, it saves consumers money and it saves us money. That's why over the last few years we've had conservation measures that have resulted in some 1,700 megawatts of electricity being conserved.

That's the equivalent of taking some 500,000 homes off the grid. That's all very good.

But on this side of the House, we are not going back to dirty coal. On this side of the House, we're shutting down dirty coal. I know the members opposite have a love affair with dirty coal. They want to see those days come back when the amount of coal that we used rose by 127%. Under our government, that is going down because the price of clean air is priceless. We are going to have the cleanest sources of electricity in North America. We'll continue to lead. It's what our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Charles Sousa: My community recognizes that the government's commitment to conservation and renewables like wind, solar, nuclear and hydroelectric will make sure we have clean air to breathe and jobs for our children. We also know that investing in renewables and conservation is what allows us to shut down polluting coal plants like Lakeview and others.

It would not be fair to the next generation to go back to the failed energy policies of the previous government. These policies would see coal emissions increase, Ontario become a net importer of energy or diesel generators in downtown Toronto as part of their long-term energy plan. While it is clear that wind and solar are the better alternatives, I think you can agree that actions speak louder than words.

Minister, my question is simple: With the member for Sarnia-Lambton recently reaffirming the PCs' commitment to coal, is the government still committed to eliminating dirty coal from our energy mix?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Absolutely. We are eliminating coal, and we've taken action. We're already ahead of schedule. This year alone, we've shut down another four units.

I know it was a happy day in Mississauga South and for all the people in the southwest GTA when the Lakeview generating station was closed. That is the beginning of closing all of our coal-fired generation, because the days of burning dirty coal are coming to an end. Though there are people on the other side who have a love affair with dirty coal, we do not, because people deserve clean air, and clean air costs us a lot less money because we have universal health care.

At the Ministry of the Environment, we agree with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, with Environmental Defence and with the Canadian Lung Association that the right thing to do, the smart thing to do and the best thing that we can do for our children is to say no to dirty coal. That's why we're committed to do that.

I want to thank the member for his leadership in letting people know that there is a brighter, cleaner future for Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Health. On November 4, the Ontario PC caucus gave the Acting Premier and media photographs of leaves strewn across the floor of the emergency garage at Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga. Earlier that same week, the CEO of the Champlain LHIN spoke about dealing with McGuinty Liberal health care cuts that are affecting emergency rooms in Ottawa. He said, "We need to beg, borrow, or steal any good ideas." Minister, will he beg, borrow or steal Credit Valley Hospital's blueprints for converting a garage into the McGuinty wing?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is an issue that has come up in this House before, and I am astonished that the member opposite would raise this issue again.

I have a question: Have you or has anyone in your caucus visited the emergency department at Credit Valley Hospital? Have you or anyone in your caucus actually spoken to anyone in the emergency department at Credit Valley Hospital—the doctors, the nurses? Are you more interested in your politically motivated drive-by smear campaign than you are in health care for the people of this province?

It is completely unacceptable for a party that pretends to care about health care in this province to make attacks on the professionalism of front-line health care workers in this province. It is completely irresponsible—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister, you just answered the question. I need you to listen to the supplementary, please.

Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: As the minister knows, I've sent both her and the member from Mississauga—Streetsville the photographs. As well, I shared an email from the chief communications officer of Credit Valley confirming the hospital renovated its garage "to include heating and other necessary utilities for patient care." Just days before that email, the CEO of the Champlain LHIN said he was looking at Mississauga hospitals in particular for "best practices" for improving emergency rooms. He said, "There's stuff that they've done that we need to import here."

Mechanics will tell you that they have electronic records that do a better job of telling the oil change history of your car than eHealth records do for patient history. Which garage did you refer the CEO of the Champlain LHIN to for best practices?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The party opposite is demonstrating their complete inability to understand health care in this province. They are not competent to criticize health care.

1110

I ask you again: Have you, has any one from your caucus or has even any member of your staff actually

visited the hospital to find out what was happening there? I have enormous respect for the health care professionals at Credit Valley Hospital, and I think you would too if you took the time to talk to them. You owe an apology to every single person who works at Credit Valley Hospital. You owe an apology to every single person who works in health care across this province. You owe an apology to the people of Mississauga.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Order. Minister of Finance, member from Durham, member from Simcoe—Grey, Minister of Consumer Services, Minister of Economic Development, member from Cambridge.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's interesting, honourable members, and the pages have noted this: It seems like, day after day, it's the same members that I need to call to order. There are so many of you in this House who do not have to be called, and I really don't want to get into the position of having to name members for interjections. Interjections can be healthy—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): But it's also healthy for members to listen when the Speaker is speaking, too, member from Simcoe North and the member from Cambridge as well. I think that's three times I've mentioned his name.

New question.

CELLPHONES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Promotion de la santé.

Dr. Devra Davis is a world-renowned Nobel Prize winner, award-winning scientist and author, and expert on health risks of cellphone radiation. She's in Ontario today. I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Davis about cellphone risk. She is impressive.

Recently, the minister rejected outright my private member's bill that would force cellphone manufacturers to move health warnings already in the small print in their manual to a sticker attached to the phone, saying that cellphones are not safe. The minister says that they're safe.

Dr. Davis invited the minister to discuss science around cellphone safety, but the minister ignored the invitation. Why is the minister refusing to look at the ever-growing body of scientific evidence linking cellphone use to health risk?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It's a pleasure for me to rise in the Legislature to answer this question and address this issue. I want to, again, refer this member to the chief medical officer of health, our expert, who says, "I want to assure Ontarians that there is no established causal link between the use of wireless communication systems, including cellphones and adverse effects on human health."

Our government takes the health and well-being of Ontarians very seriously. I also want to say that the medical experts at Health Canada say, "There is at present no scientific basis for the premise of health risk from radiofrequency electromagnetic energy at levels below the limits within [their] safety code."

I, again, refer—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The body of scientific evidence is forever growing. Toronto Public Health and the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion—an agency of this minister—have both issued health warnings. Maine, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Portland—and the list goes on—are all taking action. But the Ontario Minister of Health Promotion says that she knows better.

Today, Cancer Care Ontario is requesting an extra \$800 million for the ever-increasing number of Ontarians developing cancer, and the minister refuses to take proactive steps to decrease the risk of cancer.

Why is the minister ignoring Dr. Davis, her own agency, the precautionary principle, and leading scientists and not taking measures that do not cost a cent to the government and are essential for reducing cancer risks, especially to our children?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Again, I would like to say to the member opposite that this government takes the health of Ontarians seriously, particularly the health of Ontario's children.

I want to take this opportunity to say in this Legislature that parents have a hand to play in how much time their children are spending on cellphones.

I go again to the chief medical officer of health. I want to quote from a letter that was written to the member for Nickel Belt: "I would like to reassure you and the parents who have contacted you that the use of wireless communication systems does not pose a public health risk."

I would again refer you to the Health Canada standards, which are responsible for setting the standards relating to cellphone use. The standards, according to our chief medical officer of health, are consistent with other jurisdictions—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES FOR ABUSED MEN

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Attorney General. There is a clear and recognized need for male victim and counselling services in our communities. Men who have suffered abuse deserve support and hope as they courageously address difficult and trying issues.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, a non-profit men's counselling agency called the Men's Project is doing excellent work to assist male survivors of sexual abuse. I have been privileged to work closely with the organization, and I commend them for the support and healing programs they provide, programs that specifically address and support the unique needs of male survivors.

It is not only the individual who must overcome the trauma of sexual abuse, but whole communities and families that are affected as well. How is the government responding to those survivors, families and communities who are calling out for counselling and support services to assist male victims of sexual abuse?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member makes a very important point, because there hasn't been, across this province, a coordinated, comprehensive approach to the needs of male survivors of sexual abuse. There never has been.

We want to thank projects like the Men's Project for the excellent work that they've been doing. The ministry has been supporting that project.

But they have made the point—so many have made the point, so many who have not had access to counselling services: We need a comprehensive, province-wide approach, and that's why we announced in the summer that we're going to move ahead with a comprehensive, province-wide approach to make sure that male survivors and their families get access to the very important counselling and healing support services that they need, so that they can address the issues of the past and build a stronger future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My community will be pleased to know that our government is committed to ensuring that Ontarians, both male and female, can live in a safe and secure environment in their homes and communities.

Sexual violence of any kind, on any person, is unacceptable in our society. We know it is devastating, and it's something that will often need tremendous courage and support to overcome.

I'm glad to hear that our government is implementing plans to comprehensively address the very real concerns of male survivors, who, sadly, have been underserved or unacknowledged in the past.

In meeting with the people in my riding who are themselves survivors of abuse, they tell me that it is important for them to be consulted in relation to the delivery of services under this plan. Can the Attorney General tell us how he intends to consult with survivors and support services in this province so that we can ensure that victims can have faith that they will receive the critical services they need to recover?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the member for the question identifying a very important issue. We want to make sure that the service that is developed is as strong as it can be and meets the needs, as disparate as they might be, across the province.

A lot of work and consultation and receipt of recommendations occurred over the course of the inquiry, and a lot of input from groups like the Men's Project and the other services that have been offering assistance. But in spite of our wish to proceed as quickly as possible to build something that has not existed, we've taken advice and we're taking some extra time to make sure that we can hear voices that have not yet been heard, receive advice from people who are concerned that hasn't yet

been received, so that when we implement this service, it is as strong as it can be and meets the needs of male survivors, wherever they happen to be in the province of Ontario.

1120

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is again to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, in response to our questions concerning Lucas Macieszka, who is suffering from a rare blood disorder known as PNH, the minister implied that the efficacy of the drug Soliris has not yet been established. However, following question period, the minister said that hospitals can allow this drug to be prescribed if they have room in their global budgets. In fact, the North Bay hospital has done just that. We also now know that last night a two-week treatment of Soliris was prescribed for Lucas, now that he has been admitted to the Victoria hospital in London.

Why is the minister allowing random factors like geography and hospital budgets to determine whether someone gains access to this life-saving drug?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yesterday, we spoke about the Committee to Evaluate Drugs and the fact that it is no longer politicians who decide what drugs are covered under the Ontario drug benefit plan and what drugs are not. We have an arm's-length expert group that reviews all of the evidence and makes the very difficult decisions about what drugs ought to be covered and what drugs are not covered.

The Committee to Evaluate Drugs has looked at Soliris on two different occasions. They have determined that it is not appropriate to fund that drug for all patients with PNH but that there might be a small subset of patients for whom the drug is effective. So the Committee to Evaluate Drugs deals with drugs outside of hospitals; hospitals make their own decisions about drugs within.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We don't have a lot of time to sit here and discuss and study this issue. This is a life-saving treatment for an individual, and there are seven other people in the province of Ontario who are deteriorating daily.

Soliris has been prescribed in 25 countries, including the United States, Japan and the European Union. Why are you continuing to deny access to life-saving treatment to all Ontarians who need it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is, of course, a very, very troubling situation, and members from all parties have approached our government on this.

As I say, politicians do not make decisions about what drugs are covered, nor should they. What politicians should do, and what politicians have a responsibility to do, is ensure that there is a significant amount of money in our drug budget.

We have made significant reforms in our drug system—reforms that were opposed by the party opposite—that expanded the number of drugs that we can cover in

the formulary and that expanded the number of people we can cover with drugs.

These are difficult decisions. We do have experts who review the case. I cannot speak to the specifics of any particular case. What I can say is that we have taken action to expand the number of drugs that we can cover and the people who are covered.

AGRICULTURAL LABOUR POLICY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the International Labour Organization ruled that this government's refusal to recognize the collective bargaining rights of agricultural workers is a clear violation of international conventions. Why is the McGuinty government so hell-bent on denying basic human rights to the people who grow our food and help feed our families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We do understand that the ILO has made some recommendations regarding collective bargaining within the agricultural sector. We are looking at and reviewing the report that has been put forward by the ILO.

The member, I know, is fully aware that the Supreme Court of Canada is looking at an appeal of this case. It has been before them since December 17, 2009, and it has reserved its decision. As this case concerning collective bargaining in the agricultural sector is before the courts, it would be inappropriate, as the member knows full well, for me to comment otherwise.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: UFCW Canada has been advocating for the labour rights of agricultural workers for more than 15 years. In fact, as I introduced him earlier, UFCW Canada national president Wayne Hanley is here with us this morning.

The government of Alberta and the one here in Ontario are the only governments in this country that continue to refuse and to deny agricultural workers these rights. When is this government going to finally do the right thing and do something positive? When are they going to finally stop violating international standards and commit to working with UFCW Canada to ensure the human rights of these workers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, as this case is before the courts, it would be inappropriate for me to comment. I do welcome the UFCW, Wayne Hanley and Bob Linton, who are here with us today.

We've made great strides when it comes to the agricultural sector. It should be noted that it is our government that extended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to this sector in 2006. It should be noted that we've trained over 100 inspectors on agriculture safety specific to farms. That's under our government. Again, in June 2008, we started proactively inspecting farms. This is all under our government. We will continue to ensure that workers, in agriculture or in any other sector, are kept safe.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, accidents involving conveyers can result in significant injury, or even loss of life. A couple of weeks ago, you visited the Weetabix manufacturing facility in my riding to announce that the ministry will be undertaking heightened enforcement, specifically addressing conveyor guarding hazards. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please tell the House more about the upcoming Ministry of Labour conveyor guarding blitz?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member. I did have an opportunity to visit his beautiful riding and the many businesses that he has in his riding on November 1. We went to a business that actually has many conveyor belts working within that business, and that is part of our safety blitz right now, looking at conveyers.

We don't have a whole lot of injuries that happen with conveyers, but when they do happen, many times they are very serious injuries. That's why we're doing this through our Safe at Work Ontario strategy, which assists workers and employers in correcting any hazards that may exist within their workplace.

This is a proactive approach. It's good for everybody. Our government is committed to ensuring that all workers, when they go to work, can feel protected and come home safe and sound to their families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Just for your information, Weetabix is a manufacturer of cereals. They use all Ontario grains and export their products all over the world.

Minister, you mentioned a couple of things in your visit that really hit home. Between 2005 and 2008, two workers died and 48 workers were seriously injured in conveyor accidents alone. I understand the total cost of these injuries was more than \$7.3 million.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Are there specific workplaces that are being targeted for this important blitz?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We did have an opportunity to visit Weetabix. They make great products that they sell here, across Canada and internationally. Because they have many conveyers at that business, that's why we were there. Other businesses that are being targeted as well are those that have many conveyers in place. With this targeting, we're looking at where there have been complaints received by the ministry about a particular business with conveyers, as well as a history of non-compliance.

Keeping Ontario's workplaces safe is in everyone's best interests. Workplace hazards put employees at risk and affect the bottom line for employees. We all know that, and that's why our health and safety strategy, through Safe at Work Ontario, takes a very proactive approach to safety in this province. It's working, and we're getting positive results for employers, for workers and for the entire system.

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question today is for the Minister of Tourism. After it came to light last week that a former Niagara Parks Commission executive got away with cheating Ontario families on expenses for roller-coaster rides, nightclub tabs, alcohol and lavish trips to London, Korea and Las Vegas, the Premier stated in his media availability, and I quote, "Some people have said it is not taxpayer dollars, so it is not important."

1130

The "some people" the Premier was referring to that day was, in fact, the Minister of Tourism's spokesperson, Mukunthan Paramalingham, who told media the previous day that public dollars were not being wasted by the former Niagara executive as the commission generates its own revenue.

Whose side does the minister take: the Premier's or his handpicked spokesperson's?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. This matter was brought to my attention by the chair of the Niagara Parks Commission. As I mentioned, these expenses were incurred prior to the implementation of new expense rules.

From inception, the Niagara Parks Commission has been a completely self-funded agency, operating at no cost to the Ontario taxpayer. That said, these expenses are not appropriate and are not acceptable. I have asked the chair to look into the matter. Ms. Booker has key skills in governance, accounting and auditing. She has made significant changes to the long-standing corporate culture and practices at the commission. I am confident that the new chair will take all the necessary steps to ensure that the new expense rules are strictly adhered to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Niagara Parks Commission expense scandal and this government's response to it shows that the McGuinty Liberals do not take accountability any more seriously since the expense scandals at the OLG and eHealth.

Mr. Paramalingham was speaking for the minister. The Premier has now been reduced to correcting the record for his ministers. No one—not the minister, nor the commission—was blowing the whistle on these expenses, which we were told went through two levels of audits.

If the McGuinty Liberals cannot learn their lesson and change after the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle, why would Ontario families believe they can ever change now?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for that question again.

Our new chair, Fay Booker, has key skills in corporate governance and auditing. The fact of the matter is, Ms. Booker is changing the long-standing corporate culture and practice of the Niagara Parks Commission. She is changing the way expenses are reviewed and approved for the chair and the board. She is restructuring the operations of the commission to ensure greater accountability

and transparency, and she's moving forward on the implementation of the governance review.

Let us be assured that these are only a few of the many changes that Ms. Booker is leading. As I said before, she is looking into the matter. I have full confidence that she will take necessary steps to ensure that the NPC becomes a more accountable and transparent operation.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. In Chatham, as you know, the unemployment rate sits at nearly 14%. Many young people who have been laid off good-paying industrial jobs have taken work in restaurant industries to try to make ends meet.

A woman named Helen from Chatham, who asked that her last name not be used because she's afraid, wrote to me. She knows many servers whose tips are being stolen by their bosses, even though they earn much less than minimum wage, but these workers can't afford to complain. If they do, they'll join the growing numbers of unemployed. There's nowhere else for them to go.

Why is this government still allowing restaurant owners in Chatham and elsewhere to steal their employees' tips?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Any story we hear that affects the life of a hard-working Ontarian affects us all. That's why we've brought in further protections through our Employment Standards Act to protect our most vulnerable workers especially.

We understand the important hard work of those who are part of our hospitality sector, be it waiters or waitresses, hostesses, bartenders, chefs and others. They do some outstanding service for all of us because they represent us as our ambassadors.

Any worker who feels that they have been mistreated or that their rights have been violated, I encourage them to contact the Ministry of Labour so that our officers can look into an employment standards issue, or if it's a health and safety issue, that our inspectors can come in and investigate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: When workers across this province ask the ministry to do something about the egregious actions of tip-outs, this minister and his ministry say that there's nothing they can do because they won't change the law.

This minister continues with his rhetoric but says nothing to address the growing unfair practice. Young, low-paid restaurant workers in Chatham and across Ontario are being ripped off for the tip money that they have earned. The minister knows it. When will this government do the right thing and make it against the law for owners to steal tips from their servers? Please, give us an answer on the topic.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I think all Ontarians and all business people understand—managers and owners—is that by treating employees fairly, with respect, with caring, with understanding and ensuring that all rules are

followed, that is the best way to conduct a business. To come here and to paint the brush across many businesses, many of them small businesses, here in Ontario I think is really unfair.

What we have to do is to continue to protect our most vulnerable workers. We do that at the Ministry of Labour by providing services in over 23 different languages, by working with worker advocacy groups and looking at our labour market to ensure that all workers are protected. That's what we will continue to do. It's our top priority.

I understand this is the member's private member's bill. He has presented a healthy debate, which I think is good—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Wilkinson has moved third reading of Bill 72. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri

Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Amott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy

Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine

Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
MacLeod, Lisa
Mangat, Amrit
Martiniuk, Gerry
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Munro, Julia

Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 59; the nays are 25.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? No.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Amott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank

Murdoch, Bill
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou

Mr. Paul Miller: Another half-assed bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw that.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 86; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Peter Kormos: I rise on a point of privilege, and I make this point of privilege jointly with my colleague the House leader for the official opposition, who will be speaking briefly to it as well.

On November 19, the government released a media advisory indicating that the Honourable Brad Duguid, Minister of Energy, would present Ontario's updated long-term energy plan to ensure a clean, modern and reliable energy future on Tuesday, November 23, 2010, in the Ontario North boardroom, Macdonald Block, 900 Bay Street, Toronto. Media registration opens at 12:30 p.m.; documents are available for review at 12:30 p.m.; technical briefing by ministry staff at 1:45 p.m. It's noted that the material in the technical briefing is embargoed. "Media are not permitted to leave the briefing room until the completion of the minister's press conference"—the minister's news conference is at 2:30 p.m.

I would ask the Speaker to note that the media advisory certainly does not invite members of the Legislative Assembly, least of all opposition members or their staff, and indeed, no invitation has been extended to date. In fact, we are advised—this media advisory came out on November 19—that as of this very moment, there is still no ministerial statement planned for this chamber and no invitation has been extended to opposition members or our staff for the purpose of the briefing.

Speaker, Speakers have risen in this chamber on far too many occasions to admonish the government of the day for making statements outside the chamber that ought to be made inside the chamber. This assembly happens to be sitting. This happens to be a significant policy

announcement. It's an announcement that is being kept secret until the moment of the announcement—of course, except for the inevitable leaks to the *Toronto Star*. But I'll ask you to note that in the *Star* article of this morning, the Spears-Ferguson article, it says, "Premier Dalton McGuinty was mum on further details about the" Liberals' "long-term energy plan Monday." So it's clear that the government had, in its agenda, the maintenance of some significant level of secrecy around this announcement, and that's fine: So be it.

We witnessed last week an economic statement done in this chamber as a ministerial statement, where it ought to have been done.

I submit to you, Speaker, that the government's failure to announce its policy to this assembly before making that announcement elsewhere is a breach of convention and a breach of the collective privilege of this Legislature and of its members.

I will not go further. I would, however, refer the Speaker—the Speaker is well aware of O'Brien and Bosc, page 145, where it's noted: "In the vast majority of cases, the chair decides that a *prima facie* case of privilege has not been made. In informing the House of such a decision, the chair customarily explains (often in some detail) the factors which resulted in this finding. However, in such cases, the chair will often acknowledge the existence of a genuine grievance and may recommend avenues of redress."

I submit to you, sir, that this is a breach of privilege, but in the event that you cannot find that it is a *prima facie* breach, I would ask you, sir, to acknowledge that it is a genuine grievance on the part of the opposition, and I would further ask you to recommend avenues of redress.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakubuski: As my colleague the NDP House leader indicated, we are together in this point of privilege.

In addition to all of the points that the member has indicated with regards to the convention of matters being dealt with in this House or announced in this House prior to other locations—and we just had that last week, with the fall economic statement delivered by the Minister of Finance—there's a further concern with respect to even members of this House being given an opportunity to hear or be made aware of this statement later than the media themselves. I give evidence of that: The media will have this available for them for review at 12:30 pm. My staff was told this morning by the minister's office that we would not be welcome at that announcement. In fact, we would be—there was no room at the inn, as they say. There was only room for the media. We could not see the document until 2 p.m., at the technical briefing, and only the critic and one staff member could attend.

The actions of this government, as it comes under increasing pressure as a result of their failures to the people of Ontario, are becoming more and more questionable. I would like to just read you a ruling from Speaker Fraser's October 10, 1989, ruling that makes it clear that

contempt is not limited to direct words or action against the assembly. On page 4459 of Hansard, he states about contempt, "It does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member, it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results. Matters ranging from minor breaches of decorum to grave attacks against the authority of Parliament may be considered as contempts."

When the government is blatantly telling us as members of this assembly, duly elected and within our responsibility as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, that we will be prevented from seeing this document at the same time that the media will see it, that constitutes a breach of privilege in my mind and I believe that it should constitute a breach of privilege in the mind of every member of this assembly. We have the absolute right, as members of this assembly, to be given access to those documents and access to that announcement at the earliest possible time, not after being prevented from seeing it at the same time that the media would have it released to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you to the member for Welland and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. In fact, Speakers have ruled in the past that this is not a breach of privilege, nor is it a contempt of the House.

I would note, and I appreciate that the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke actually noted, unlike the member for Welland, who clearly just forgot, that the opposition were offered a briefing today at 2 p.m. The news conference does not happen until 2:30 p.m., and the media is embargoed until 2:30 p.m. So the opposition was offered a briefing, and it is clear that that opportunity is available to them at 2 p.m.

The history of having embargoed media briefings prior to announcements is long held in this House. All parties have done it, and I think that it's disingenuous on behalf of the opposition to raise that as something new and in some way in breach of the rules of this House. I would note for your information that in 2006, the Minister of Energy, Donna Cansfield, announced the first 20-year long-term energy plan. This announcement was not made in the House. It was the beginning of our commitment to a long-term energy plan and a point of order, or a point of privilege, was not raised with respect to that announcement at that time.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I was there for that.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would also note that I did have the decency of listening to your interjections and remarks, member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I would hope Mr. Speaker will provide me with the same opportunity.

I would note that in the claim of personal privilege in Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, it is stated at page 13, section 31, that "statements made outside the House by a member may not be used as the basis for a question of privilege." I would also note that a point of order can only be raised at the time that it happens, and

that in effect, this point of order could be considered premature.

However, more to the point of this particular point of privilege that is being raised by the member for Welland, I would note that in House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Marleau and Montpetit, which the member for Welland usually quotes in this House and is very familiar with—he failed to quote what is on page 379: “A minister is under no obligation to make a statement in the House. The decision of a minister to make an announcement outside of the House instead of making a statement in the House during routine proceedings has been raised as a question of privilege, but the Chair has consistently found there to be no grounds to support a claim that any privilege has been breached.”

Would you like me to repeat that for the House?

Interjection.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I think that’s fairly clear, but I will in fact also—if the member for wherever would allow me—refer you as well, Mr. Speaker, to three other rulings of previous Speakers of this House.

Speaker Turner, in February 1983, on a point of privilege raised by the former member for Renfrew North, Mr. Conway, on the question of some discussions between media and the then Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Mr. Elgie, stated as follows: “Since Thursday, I have given very careful consideration to the complex aspects of parliamentary privilege as it relates to this matter, and I have had an opportunity to review the rulings of a number of Speakers of the House of Commons of Canada on this subject. My ruling deals only with the technical and procedural aspects of the matter and not in any way with the merits of the situation or the allegations; that is, the question which I must decide is not whether or not there was ministerial impropriety but whether the situation or allegations should in fact be considered a matter of privilege.”

Speaker Lamoureux dealt with this matter in a ruling on October 30, 1969. In his ruling, he stated: “The question has often been raised whether parliamentary privilege imposes on ministers an obligation to deliver communications to the public through the House of Commons or to make these announcements or statements in the House rather than outside the chamber. The question has been asked whether honourable members are entitled, as part of the parliamentary privilege, to receive such information ahead of the general public. I can find no precedent to justify this suggestion. There may be, in such circumstances, a question of propriety or a question of courtesy. There may be a grievance. But in my view there cannot be a question of privilege.”

Again, in April 1993, Speaker Warner, in response to a point of order raised by Mr. Eves, the then member for Parry Sound, stated:

“The member will also know that for better or worse there is nothing in our standing orders or procedures which compels ministers to make statements in the House, including budgets, and indeed there is nothing out of order about announcing a budget outside of the House,

and if memory serves, that in fact has occurred in this province.

“But I would reiterate that all matters of substance of a parliamentary nature should be made here. I have no control over making that happen. I can only ask that people do that.”

Again, Speaker Curling in 2005, in response to a point of privilege raised by Mr. Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, stated: “The minister appears to have made an announcement, outside the House, that anticipates a bill and a budgetary measure. But there is nothing wrong with anticipation per se—it happens a lot; the issue is whether the announcement goes further and reflects adversely on the parliamentary process.” He goes on to say that in fact it does not and there is no contempt.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would direct you to all of these precedents as well as, of course, to Marleau and Montpetit, and I would simply state that there is in fact no breach of privilege in this case, no contempt of the House, and what is being undertaken today by the Minister of Energy is completely in order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member from Welland, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the government House leader. Because this is an issue that I believe needs to be addressed today because of an event taking place this afternoon, I am going to recess the House for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1212.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d like to thank the member for Welland for raising this issue, and the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the government House leader for their contributions.

It is a sound and long-standing principle that policy statements and announcements made by government ought to be made in the Legislature, such that members of this assembly are the first to receive the information. As the member for Welland correctly stated in addressing his point of privilege, there is no shortage of examples of Speakers asserting this important principle. For instance, I delivered what I thought was a very comprehensive ruling on this very issue last November 2. Let me quote briefly from that ruling:

This “is but the latest in a long litany of similar points of order raised over the years by members sincerely frustrated by the ongoing tendency of governments to make announcements outside of the Legislative Assembly in advance of, or instead of, informing the House.

“I and my predecessors have repeatedly conveyed our deep concern about how these types of extra-parliamentary announcements erode the stature of Parliament. Speakers have repeatedly implored governments to consider the impact of this erosion and how it damages the reputation of the foundation institution of this province.” Sadly, “these pleas go repeatedly unheard and unheeded....

“Though in no position to do anything about it, like my predecessors, I am sympathetic to the grievance these types of activities raise. Nothing about this is new, and similar complaints have risen from all three parties in this House over the years as their roles have changed from

government to opposition. The Speaker can only suggest that it falls to the players to heal this syndrome of casual diminishments of the legitimate and key role of the opposition and of this House. In reality, only the government of the day is in a position to lead change...."

I'm going to repeat that, because I need this to be heard by all members. The Speaker can only suggest. Then it falls to the players. It falls to you, the members, to heal this syndrome of casual diminishments of the legitimate and key role of the opposition and of this House. In reality, only the government of the day is in a position to lead change on this. I can only confirm my continued adherence to that statement.

While the Speaker cannot compel that statements be made in this House, once again I urge that proper deference to the House should always be a central part of the planning that governments do when they are rolling out announcements of government policy.

As for the matter of briefings and press conferences that are apparently planned for today by the Minister of Energy, as Speakers have noted before, these types of briefings are extra-parliamentary events and, obviously, happen outside the legislative milieu. As such, the Speaker has no jurisdiction over them and can neither insist that any type of briefing or advance information be provided at all, nor when or where it should occur.

I can say, though, that courtesy might dictate that for such an important announcement, such large-scale briefings, if they are to occur, ought to be available to all members who wish to participate. That would be the ideal situation and one likely to produce a more harmonious House. Without doubt, the House always functions more effectively when a basic sense of goodwill underpins the proceedings of this chamber.

Having said that, I must again say that the Speaker has no control in the matter.

The member does raise a valid grievance but not a *prima facie* case of privilege.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health Promotion concerning cellphone safety. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1217 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome today Bob Gillett, who is the president of Algonquin College. He's here with us, as is Doug Orendorff, who is a board member for the college and also lives in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park, gentlemen.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I want to welcome a couple of folks in the east gallery. Maureen Piercy is the president of Loyalist College, and to her right is a board member. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today guests who are here for the tribute to former member Keith Norton. In the House today we have family members Donna Nesbitt, sister; Robert Slack; Tracey Nesbitt, niece; Carl Norton, brother; Jean Norton; Wendy Norton; Jayne Mason, niece; Monty Seli; Jacki Wilson, niece; Randy Wilson; and Nicole Stinson, grandniece.

Also, friends and colleagues joining us today: David Corder; June Hicks; Bill Hicks; Kimberley Hicks-Ruttan; Nora Sanders, from the great riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, I might add; Gina Saccoccio Brannan; Panos Petrides; Bill Noble; Ross Johnstone; Sarah Tothill; David Menaker; Joanne Cook; Robin Barker; Laura Zamprogna; Linden Cress; Susan Preston; Joan MacKenzie Davies; Gillian McCloskey; Simone Scott; Janice Waugh; Afroze Edwards; Barbara Hall, head of our human rights commission; David Evershed; Patricia Evershed; and Dee Dee Heywood.

Also joining us is former Premier Mike Harris, member for Nipissing in the 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th and 37th Parliaments; and former Premier Ernie Eves, former member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey and Parry Sound-Muskoka from the 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th and 38th Parliaments.

Welcome to our two former Premiers and welcome to all of our guests today.

Mr. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce some representatives from the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario. We have with us the CEO of the organization, Mr. Bill Greenhalgh; Mr. Claude Balthazard, a director; and Mr. J. Scott Allinson, the director of government relations and external relations. I'll be introducing a private member's bill relevant to their organization in a few minutes.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: This statement is directed to the Minister of the Environment.

Last night I had a meeting in my riding of Durham with the Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water. It was an important meeting. The mayor of Scugog, Marilyn Pearce, as well as Mayor-elect Chuck Mercier, along with municipal staff and councillors, were in attendance, as well as staff and council from Uxbridge. A number of staff from the York-Durham Ministry of the Environment district office were in attendance, led by Dave Fumerton, the district manager.

The meeting was arranged by David Langille, a member of the coalition, and was a very well-managed information meeting. The issue at large was the aban-

doned gravel pit at 13471 Lakeridge Road, operated by Earthworx. The concern is that the pit being rehabilitated or filled is on the Oak Ridges moraine, and it is on top of an aquifer which is the source of clean water for much of Ontario.

My constituents have been asking the Ministry of the Environment, by email and other means, since May, June and July to investigate the suspicious, potentially contaminated fill. Last night, in frustration and worry about water contamination, they requested, now formally, for Minister Wilkinson to issue a ministerial order for an immediate moratorium before things get worse. Some have called it a catastrophe. It is on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I respectfully and formally ask the minister to stop the filling, take control, clarify the rules and conditions—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

OTTAWA CHINESE COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I was very pleased to attend, this past Saturday evening, the special 35th anniversary gala for the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre. It was a great opportunity for our whole community to come together and celebrate the important contributions the OCCSC has made over the past 35 years in Ottawa and to look ahead to the important work they do every day in our city.

This important work helps newcomers and the wider Chinese community in Ottawa with a broad spectrum of engagement. The OCCSC offers settlement, language, employment and well-being services, as well as sports, recreation and dance. It is a testament that their 40 staff and many volunteers serve more than 8,000 people per year in those important areas.

The centre was established in December 1975, and as we approach the 35th anniversary, I'm delighted to take the opportunity to commend and recognize them in our Legislature.

I'd like to offer special thanks to William Joe—Billy Joe, as he's known with much love in our community, has worked extremely hard in our community and was a founding father of this great organization; Shek Ho Chiang, the past president; Sharon Kan, the executive director; Irene Zhou, the current president; and Jonas Ma, the vice-president of the organization.

Congratulations. The gala on Saturday was very well organized and was enjoyed by all.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: Millicent Patterson is a constituent of mine and she's in her 80s. Like all of us, she requires oxygen to survive. Due to her advanced age, she requires the assistance of technology to provide that oxygen, technology that is powered by electricity.

Before the McGuinty government's Green Energy Act kicked in, her hydro bill was \$200. Now that it has

kicked in, this senior with a fixed income has seen her bill more than double.

This government just keeps piling on new hydro costs, HST, green energy projects, and deals with foreign conglomerates that put more and more pressure on the people of Ontario.

For seniors like Millicent, a time-of-use smart meter would make her life unbearable. In order to pay for her electricity, she and many others must decide to go without food, go without home care or go without a roof over their heads.

It's time that we take a look at the human costs of bad government policy. Premier McGuinty likes to talk about clean air, but he is wilfully ignoring the cost that our citizens are paying for this hare-brained scheme.

Millicent Patterson needs air too, and the Green Energy Act is taking it away from her. I've seen a great many injustices from this government, but this is a new low, and Millicent Patterson will be paying the price.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just wanted to inform the House that November 20 was the trans day of remembrance.

Trans folk in our communities experience a 41% attempted suicide rate, a 50% poverty rate and a 97% rate of discrimination on the job.

What we have asked in the New Democratic Party is that the two words "gender identity" be added to the Ontario Human Rights Code. I know that we have Barbara Hall with us today, and she has written a letter to the Star asking the same. Only then will our trans folk be truly protected.

The name of my bill, which I've now tabled three times, is Toby's Law. Toby Dancer was her name. Adrian Chornowol was his name before he transitioned. Adrian was one of Canada's foremost musicians. Adrian produced and played on Ian Tyson albums and died an untimely death. We named the bill after her.

The federal government is acting. There is a bill in third reading asking for the same thing across Canada. We're asking that the majority Liberal government here act and do the same. Two small words will add a world of difference to trans people who are suffering in our midst, and those are "gender identity" in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

I feel, as I stand here, that I'm channelling a bit of Keith Norton's spirit in doing so.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: While the economy is just beginning to recover, residents of Ontario are still feeling the effects of the global economic crisis. The fall economic statement showed that the McGuinty government is moving forward to create a more prosperous, more attractive and more open Ontario.

In order to aspire to a more prosperous future, our provincial government is investing in the creation of new jobs, while also focusing on reducing the deficit.

In the fall economic statement, it was announced that the 2010-11 deficit projection will be \$18.7 billion, down from the \$19.7 billion forecasted in the 2010 budget. That's almost a 25% improvement from the \$24.7-billion deficit forecasted in the 2009 budget.

The government has laid out a realistic, responsible plan to cut the deficit in half within five years of its highest point and to eliminate it in eight years.

Also, the Conference Board of Canada reported that Ontario's investments last year helped save 70,000 jobs at the height of the global recession.

As the recovery takes hold, Ontario families need to know that our government has a responsible plan to respond to the challenges of today's economy. It showed this in the recent fall economic statement.

1510

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise to bring to the attention of Premier Dalton McGuinty several emails I have received from constituents affected by the closure of medical laboratories in Tottenham, Stayner and Wasaga Beach.

Pat from Creemore, who used to go to the lab in Stayner, told me that she got an estimate of \$80 to take a cab ride to the laboratory in Wasaga Beach and back.

Eric from Wasaga Beach wrote, "It is a poor situation when a sick or elderly person who has nothing to eat for 12 hours is forced to wait for an extended period and is not even able to sit down due to the lack of space."

Suzanne from Tottenham wrote, "I want to point out that while at the lab in Alliston early in the morning, the lineup was huge and standing room [only] for some of us. I sat on the window ledge and some people were waiting outside."

Denise from Elmvale wrote, "I went on my lunch to have my blood work done, which I thought I had avoided the morning rush. It was one and a half hours from the time I left my office, which is a three-minute drive to the hospital. I had to pay \$4 for parking and lost one hour of pay that day. If the lab was still [open] in Elmvale, I would not have lost one hour pay and would not have had to pay \$4 for parking."

As I've said in this House on several occasions, this situation is unacceptable to me and my constituents. I'm calling on Premier McGuinty to reopen the labs in Tottenham, Stayner and Elmvale to alleviate the pressure at labs in Alliston, Bolton, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach and Midland.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Rick Johnson: Last week, the fall economic statement provided some great news for Ontario families. The McGuinty government is aware that times are tough financially in Ontario and across the globe. Because of this, we have continued to create ways to make lives easier for Ontario families.

The McGuinty government has introduced the Ontario clean energy benefit. This benefit will assist four million residential customers and 400,000 small businesses with their hydro bills. The 10% reduction results in a typical savings of \$150 a year per home, \$1,700 per small business and \$2,000 per farm.

As a response to the economic recession that Ontario has faced in recent years, Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth will help to create 600,000 jobs within the next 10 years.

It's extremely important to note that 75% of the jobs lost to the global recession have been restored in Ontario. This is compared to only 10% in the United States. Since last spring alone, Ontario has created more than 180,000 new jobs. The McGuinty government has also decreased the projected deficit by 25%, and \$260 million in savings have been identified in the ongoing comprehensive review.

When it comes to the economic recovery, nobody on this side of the House is prepared to declare a victory, but we're demonstrating that with these kinds of investments, tax reforms and prudent fiscal management by this government, Ontario is leading Canada and Canada is leading the world with regard to the economic recovery.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Families are concerned about the rising cost of energy, so our fall economic statement introduced measures that will help make life easier for Ontario families and seniors. We've created the Ontario clean energy benefit, a five-year transitional benefit that will reduce the cost of energy for small businesses, farms and families by 10%. This important credit adds to measures that were previously announced, like the Ontario energy and property tax credit and the northern Ontario energy credit. The McGuinty government understands that every little bit helps during lean times.

Over the next 20 years, energy rates are expected to increase an average of three-and-a-half per cent per year. These cost increases are necessary to modernize Ontario's energy production and transmission capacity. Under the Tories, this province saw no investment in energy production. By contrast, our government has made record investments in clean energy production, and we're on track to shut down the dirty coal-fired plants that pollute our environment, causing billions of dollars in health costs annually. By 2015, we will have eliminated a total of 35 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

Finally, we're making major investments in solar power and wind energy. These investments will ensure that Ontario families and seniors can rely on clean, affordable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. David Zimmer: The official opposition likes to play partisan games in this Legislature, but their

hypocrisy will reach a new peak when we debate their motion on stranded debt this afternoon. After all, the debt retirement charge was the result of the Conservative government's bungled privatization of our energy sector; and our residential stranded debt was the result of years of energy mismanagement by Conservative and, yes, NDP governments who refused to even acknowledge, let alone confront, the problem facing our energy sector. Instead, the Conservative government shifted billions in stranded debt onto the backs of Ontario families and, before their time was up, managed to add yet another billion dollars in debt.

The McGuinty government, on the other hand, has made the responsible decisions that have allowed us to pay down that debt by a billion dollars a year each year since 2004. On the contrary, we are making the necessary investments to build a clean, robust energy system that will meet tomorrow's demand. We've made the tough choices, and while we haven't always done the easy thing, I'm very proud to say we've always done the right thing for Ontario families and seniors to ensure clean, reliable electricity and to help them plan for future needs.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I beg leave to present a Report on the Delayed Release of MPPs from the 2010 Budget Lock-up from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: At this time, I'll move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Carried on division.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REGISTERED HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES PROFESSIONNELS EN RESSOURCES HUMAINES INSCRITS

Mr. Zimmer moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 138, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association / Projet de loi 138, Loi con-

cernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Zimmer: Briefly, the Human Resources Professional Association is Ontario's leading human resources thought leader, with more than 20,000 members. The largest association of its kind in the country, it regulates the HR profession in Ontario and issues the "certified human resources professional" designation, the national standard of excellence in human resource management. Its membership directly impacts 1.9 million employees and 8,000 organizations in Ontario out of a labour force of just seven million.

HRPA is celebrating its 75th year and is currently guided by a 20-year-old private act. Today, I'm proud to introduce the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2010. The association and its members are seeking a new act to enhance its current regulatory authority to ensure that the quality of the HR profession in Ontario will serve the interests of all employers and employees in Ontario by ensuring greater public transparency.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Using the Speaker's prerogative, I'd like to welcome a couple of guests of mine from Fanshawe College here today: Howard Rundle, president of the college, and Britta Winther, chair of the board of governors. Welcome to Queen's Park.

KEITH NORTON

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Keith Norton.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's indeed an honour and a privilege to stand on behalf of the New Democratic Party and to speak about one of the heroes of this Legislature.

This was a man who served for 10 years as MPP for Kingston and the Islands from 1975 to 1985. He tried again in 1990, unsuccessfully. But really, the reason I stand here and call him a hero has somewhat to do with his service to the people of Ontario, but has a great deal more to do with his personal bravery. For you see, Keith Norton—and this is in the words of Eric Dowd, our journalist emeritus here, who said that he's a landmark in Ontario because he was the first openly gay candidate who had such a high profile. He held five cabinet positions in his days here in the Legislature and then ran again as an openly gay man in what is now Toronto Centre.

I want to paint a bit of a picture about the era in which he lived and breathed and had his being, because I lived and breathed and had my being in it, too. I remember growing up in a very United Church household, as did he. In fact, he wanted to preach at one point in the United Church. Around my dining room table at home were red Tories and were Tommy Douglas CCF/NDPers, so there were lots of really ardent debates going on, from fiscal conservatives who were nationalists and socially progressive, and social progressives who were occasionally fiscally conservative. In that conversation, into which occasionally a very brave Liberal appeared from parts of the family, there was discussion about a whole range of topics, but unfortunately—I have to say this; I'm a kid of the 1950s and the 1960s—there was also a great deal of entrenched homophobia. That was the reality of many of our upbringings and that was across party lines. We were all guilty of it back then.

He grew up in a period when there were bathhouse raids; when John Damien, if you remember that name, was fired from the racetrack because he was gay. It wasn't until 1986 that sexual orientation was added to the Ontario Human Rights Code. It was fitting, I think, that later in his life, in 1996, Keith Norton became the first openly gay chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

It was the era when AIDS was a scourge and was blamed on the LGBTT community. That was the era. It was an era when, in 1988, the United Church ordained the first openly gay and lesbian people; that a third of the church members, particularly in rural areas, which is where Keith was from, left the church—walked, never to return. I remember it well because I'm a United Church minister, and in 1991 I was privileged to perform the first legalized same-sex marriage in Ontario. But it didn't come without a cost. The cost was death threats, the cost was ostracization—and that was in 2001, so I can only imagine what Keith lived through and lived with in his era.

But it didn't stop him. He never hid it. To the great, good fortune and wisdom of Premier Mike Harris, who I know is here, it didn't matter to his cabinet either, and that truly is a kudos, because Keith Norton was truly a Progressive Conservative. That's who he was, and I remember that voice.

It is an honour to stand and to welcome our esteemed guests, the Premiers; Barbara Hall, commissioner; and relatives. Thank you for sharing such a hero with us for all of those years. Thank you for sharing him because we know here better than anyone what it costs to be here. We know the hours, the work. We know all of that, and we didn't have to come out in 1990 the way he did. Most of us have grown-up or lived now in a much kinder and gentler province.

I have to say that when I posed on the grand staircase, it was a very unusual portrait for a little NDP girl here, to stand there with two Conservative Premiers, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, a group of Conservatives—hopefully with some red Tories in their midst, and maybe the

occasional brave Liberal was standing on that staircase too—and it sort of felt like I was home again. But it's a kind of home that I can now live in comfortably, and I can live in it comfortably because it's no longer a homophobic home because of the likes of heroes like Keith Norton.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I feel very honoured and privileged today to speak on behalf of the government and Premier McGuinty on the passing of Keith Norton, not only a former member from Kingston and the Islands, but also a very close and good friend of mine for the 15 years that he lived in Kingston.

Keith and I first met at Joyceville Penitentiary. Yes, we were both at Joyceville Penitentiary back in 1971 when we were both involved with groups called Ten Plus and Five Plus. These were basically individuals from the community who would every so often go into the penitentiaries—and we've got seven of them in the Kingston area—to try to bring some sort of normalization to the inmates that were there. We met there and became good friends.

We also ran independently in the municipal election of December 1972 and we were both elected at that time. Together with a number of other newly elected councillors, we literally opened up the system of local government in Kingston. All committees that were basically private affairs before that, behind closed doors, were opened up. The following year, the young bucks that we were in our early 30s, we took over the so-called finance committee and thereby basically, more or less, ran the municipal council of the city of Kingston for the following three or four years, much more to the chagrin of the much more senior members. But I think that the city was better for it, and if it hadn't been for the leadership of Keith Norton, it simply wouldn't have happened.

I remember how many a time, both when he was a municipal councillor and later on as a member of this Legislature, he would have dinner at my house. He was a single individual. I was young and married. As a matter of fact, there was the odd occasion when he would babysit our children, including, I should say, my son, Mark, who now happens to be the mayor of the city of Kingston.

In 1975, when Syl Apps, who was an excellent member from the Kingston area, left after having served for 13 years, Keith ran to be the Conservative nominee and later on he became the member. My Liberal friends here may not like this, but my wife and I completely and totally supported Keith Norton during his election campaigns in the late 1970s and early 1980s because he was a red Tory. He was a fiscal Conservative, but on most social issues he was extremely progressive.

Let me give you one example. He served for a while as Minister of Community and Social Services in this Legislature, and as a matter of fact it was during that time that I believe I was in here for the first time. He was in that position from 1977 to 1981, and he brought into government people such as former family court judge George Thomson. He basically brought in George to take

a look at what we called the Deserted Wives' and Children's Maintenance Act, and brought our family law support legislation into the 20th century. Of course, we all know of the tremendous contribution that George Thomson made, both here and federally, as deputy minister under all governments of all the various stripes during that period of time and afterwards.

Those are just some of the things that he was involved in. I could go on and on about so many other issues that he was involved in over time. We've heard about the tremendous contribution that he made in the whole human rights legislation, both here and federally etc.

I was very pleased to attend his memorial service, although not pleased to be there because he died way too young a man. It was great to see, at the Trinity St. Paul's United Church on Bloor Street back in February, so many people from this community in Toronto, but also so many people from the Kingston community attend that. I can tell you, in the 15 years that I've been here, I don't think there's been a larger gathering than there is today to witness this occasion in paying tribute to him.

I can remember at the time, for example, Premier Mike Harris spoke and Senator Hugh Segal, who, of course, resides in the Kingston area as well. Many of his friends from Kingston remembered the heydays of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when we truly had, I believe, a Progressive Conservative government here in the province of Ontario, when we truly had red Tories who made sure that the laws that needed to change, that hadn't been changed in many, many years, were changed. He was an instrumental part in that, as a matter of fact.

1530

Let me just give you a couple of quotes of what people say about my good friend Keith Norton.

"He had high ideals about the laws of our country," and he was "passionate about stopping any abuse of children." That was said by his friend Bev Anderson, an individual I know extremely well as well.

Premier Dalton McGuinty said at that time: "It's difficult to overstate Keith Norton's influence for good in Ontario," and that is certainly so, in every way.

A crown attorney in Kingston currently, Ross Drummond, who used to work with him in his constituency office back in the 1970s states—and he just repeats a small, little story as to what kind of an individual Keith Norton was in our community: "All his work came from the heart," says Ross Drummond, recalling an instance when a man came into Keith's constituency office seeking help—no money, no food and nowhere else to turn. "At that late hour there were no agencies open to assist. Keith didn't think twice. He took this man to a store and bought him enough groceries to get through. That's the Keith Norton I mourn and will miss."

That's stated by Ross Drummond. I, as a friend of his for his many years in Kingston, can certainly attest to that as well.

This province, this Legislature and our society are the worse for the fact that he has left us. Let us just pay tribute to an outstanding individual, regardless of partisan

stripes, who contributed to the welfare of this province from which future generations will benefit.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll be sharing my time, on behalf of the PC caucus, with the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

Keith Norton's life was marked by his inner strength, his courage and his sense of conviction. As president of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, as chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Keith fought each and every day on behalf of the disabled and the elderly, and he stood up for the marginalized in society.

He led the fight against ageism in Ontario in starting the dialogue that eventually did away with mandatory retirement in our province. He fought for the rights of the disabled, promoting accessibility and helping to create guidelines for accessible education in Ontario. And he advanced the cause of gay and lesbian rights, both in his own example and leadership and by fighting for those rights throughout his time as chief commissioner of the Human Rights Commission after being appointed by Premier Mike Harris.

Keith had an early start at the podium. There are stories that, as far back as age 16, Keith would fill in for the minister at Claremont United Church in his hometown. He'd ascend to the pulpit, and the minister would say later that his public speaking took the same theme of those services: public stewardship.

In 1975, just in his early 30s, Keith Norton won the riding of Kingston and the Islands, and he soon became known as the boy wonder of Premier Davis's governments, holding down and excelling in pretty well every significant social cabinet post, from health to environment to education. In fact, the media, because of his success and the prominent role he played, dubbed him "the minister of everything."

As education minister, Keith fought for parents to have a place and a say in their child's education. As a local member, he oversaw major reconstructions at the Kingston hospital and at Queen's University, where he went to law school.

Keith will always be known for his unwavering commitment to the public good. He was truly a champion for his constituents and for the underdog.

When he announced he was returning to politics in 1990 to run as a Mike Harris candidate in that election, he did so as an openly gay politician. As Randall Pearce, a former federal PC candidate and former communications director under Prime Minister Mulroney, recently wrote in the *Globe and Mail*: "For Mr. Norton, coming out in the 1990 election wasn't cynical. It was cathartic. He was a man completely comfortable in his skin. I recall him telling a bunch of us one night how he had been out to his family since he was a young adolescent. He never made any pretence to be anything other than who he was."

In that column, Randall continues that because of Keith Norton's decision to come out of the closet in

1990, "I never had to be in the closet, politically speaking."

I got to know Keith very well over the last number of years. I considered him a friend, a trusted adviser, a confidante. It was a very proud moment when he endorsed my bid to be leader of the Ontario PC Party.

I remember very clearly the last time that I saw Keith. It was last September. His long-time friend and adviser Gina Brannan had a barbecue in her backyard with her husband, Gord. It was a great night, one of those beautiful fall evenings. It was an outstanding barbecue. Of course, a touch of Ontario wine was served that night as well. Keith was his usual witty self, reminiscing about politics, telling all the old war stories from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the challenges of today, and always, in his own way, giving his quiet but powerful insight and advice to me as leader of our party. Though he must have been suffering at that time from the disease that would fell him a few months later, he remained strong in his own private way. He didn't tell any of us; he wouldn't have wanted us to worry.

That same strength that carried him through his battle with cancer was the strength that carried him through his life, inspires us today and made him a legend within our party and within our country: fighting for the elderly, fighting for the disabled, fighting for the marginalized in society, and being a champion to all who needed him.

We miss Keith Norton. We'll never forget him.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I first met Keith in 1977 when I was elected, as a very junior member, to the PC minority government. I got to know Keith quite well very quickly. In those days we had night sittings on two nights of the week, and if any members were in the Legislature, there was usually debate going on in the legislative chamber and a card game going on upstairs, and Keith Norton participated in both the legislative debate and the card game upstairs. Sometimes he participated in the card game in a very, very skilled way, but sometimes not. He wasn't that good at euchre, and Premier Harris was telling me earlier today that he often lost late into the night.

The respect that caucus had for Keith was immediate. When Keith talked, he talked about subjects which he had read about. He had great intellect, as well as being a wonderful people person.

In 1978-79, as parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, Mr. McMurtry, I brought forward the first Family Law Reform Act that this province had ever seen, and my friend referred to that. Keith, as the Minister of Community and Social Services, worked with me and Mr. McMurtry to make certain that this passed into law, notwithstanding that we were in a minority Parliament at that time. His knowledge and help was greatly appreciated.

In 1981, I became a cabinet minister when Keith then became the environment minister. It soon became obvious in the cabinet that Keith had the same kind of respect that he carried outside of cabinet. When Keith spoke, people listened. In many ways, he was a social conscience for the cabinet.

One of his great friends of the day was Dr. Bette Stephenson, the education minister—a great friend of Mr. Eves, as well, and of Mr. Harris, who were elected first in 1981. I phoned Bette a few days ago to ask her what I might say to the Legislature today in honour of Keith Norton. Bette said, "He wasn't a Progressive Conservative. He was a progressive Progressive Conservative." That was her description of him.

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At that time, the structure of cabinet meetings was a little different than it is today. We used to have policy fields: The social policy field was one, the resource policy field was one and the justice policy field was the other. In the social policy field, Mr. Norton and Bette Stephenson dominated that particular policy field. They were to the point because they trusted each other and were looking out for each other and for the people of Ontario, to such a degree that they were actually in the stages of negotiating substantial changes within the different portfolios so that services could be brought to the people of Ontario in a better manner. Unfortunately, that did not come to fruition, and I think we still suffer from the fact that they weren't able to bring that to a conclusion.

Mr. Norton, notwithstanding that he was compassionate and concerned very much about the poorer people in Ontario, the people who needed help, was a fiscal conservative, as has been said before. I found it strange that Ms. DiNovo would bring forward the example of Tommy Douglas, who often is misunderstood as a socialist, who may be described today in terms of spending and fiscal restraint. Tommy Douglas perhaps was more of a progressive Progressive Conservative than he was a socialist. He was a Premier who balanced a budget 17 years out of 17 as Premier in that province. So the comparison between the two is not without some validity.

He had these challenging ministries, as was mentioned before, the really big ones, the ones with big budgets, big problems. I mean, community and social services, education and health probably make up about 80% of our total budget. Keith lost the election in May 1985. I think one of the reasons that he lost that particular election was that he was the education minister at the time. Unfortunately, he held the responsibility for bringing full funding to Catholic schools, which was not popular, quite frankly, with a lot of Progressive Conservative supporters. I've always thought that that was perhaps the reason that Keith Norton lost at that time. I don't think it was a recognition by the people of Kingston and the Islands that he wasn't a wonderful representative.

From the day he lost that election in 1985 until the day he died, he remained a party loyalist. You could call Keith Norton at any time and ask him to do something for you and he would try to do that for you, and he would do it with class and style. Already mentioned was his tremendous leadership as president of the Human Rights Tribunal and the Ontario Human Rights Commission. I talked to him at the times that he was serving on those particular boards and he explained to me that his greatest

challenge was to make them more relevant, to give quicker decisions and to be much more efficient. He was able to do that, and I think that we have to continue within those kinds of tribunals to seek those improvements as we go forward. He was an excellent example of someone who could still bring human rights, defend the disabled, make certain that discrimination did not occur in our province or country, but seek efficiencies at the same time.

Keith was an amazing politician in this regard: He was, not only as a politician but as a person in charge of running the Human Rights Tribunal, never jealous of his jurisdiction. Often I have found in politics, as many do, that people who are in charge of a ministry or in charge of a commission become overly jealous of their jurisdiction. All Keith wanted to do was make certain that his client, the citizen, the complainant in a Human Rights Tribunal case, found the quickest and best and speediest and fairest resolution to the problem. That's the way he thought.

One of the last times I saw Keith was about two years ago, at the funeral of Marnie Johnston, the wife of former MPP Jack Johnson, who has also unfortunately passed as well since that time. I thought it kind of strange that Keith would be there, since his separation from Jack would have been over 20 years, but it was not unusual for Keith to continue caring about the people he cared about and loved in the past. He was a great friend of Jack in this Legislature and he wanted to go there to comfort him on the day of the funeral of Jack's wife. When I talked to him at that funeral, he was very much interested in what our party was doing and how many of the members that he knew were doing as well.

As has been stated, Keith was very comfortable with himself. He was a casual man; in fact, often I wondered how many days in a row he could wear the same sports jacket to cabinet or to this Legislature. He really didn't care that much about that particular part of what he was doing, yet he could look very elegant at an evening dinner somewhere. But he had this casual air around him that would make you want to invite him to your dinner table. You would love to have a conversation with him because he was always interested, he was always interesting, and he knew what he was talking about.

We've lost a great Ontarian. I want to thank his family for sharing him with the people of Ontario. You can be so, so proud of him. I want to thank all of his friends, his family and my former colleagues for coming here to honour and celebrate a great life.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the honourable members for their contributions as we've celebrated the life of former member Keith Norton, and to thank the family and the friends who have joined us here at the Legislature today. On behalf of the Ontario Legislature, I'd like to express our condolences to the family and to his friends. Copies of the Hansard and a DVD of today's proceedings will be sent to each of you as a memento of this special day here at the Legislature. Thank you all very much for coming today.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

This petition was given to me by one of my constituents, Mr. Chuck McEwan. I want to sign it and give it to page Kyle.

POWER PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has cancelled the Oakville peaker plant, citing a decrease in need for power in that community, proposing to meet needs by better transmission, and despite the fact that the government may face a \$1-billion lawsuit due to the cancellation;

"Whereas the King township peaker plant is going forward, with the Ontario government having shut off debate about the plan at the OMB through regulation, after failing to provide a proper environmental assessment or community consultation;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To give the King township peaker plant and the local community the same consideration as residents of Oakville, and to decide on the future of the peaker plant on a non-partisan basis."

I've affixed my signature to this and given to it page William.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to read on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls. To that

end, I'd like to thank a number of people who have signed this and sent it to him from the city of Chatham.

It reads as follows:

"Whereas grandparents often become a family's first reserves in times of crisis. Grandparents act as fun playmates for children, role models and family historians, mentors, and help establish self-esteem and security for children.

"One potential aspect of the divorce is the disruption or severance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship.

"Also, in cases of the death of a parent (the maternal or paternal grandparents' child), grandparents should continue to enjoy access to their grandchildren by the living parent, as visitation and access was fully established prior to death of parent;....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That grandparents have legal rights to access and visitation with their grandchildren in the event of parental divorce or death of a parent."

I'm pleased to affix my signature on this petition and to send it down with page Jennifer.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government has effectively neutered municipal authority and local decision-making through legislation and policies such as the provincial policy statement, 2005, and the Green Energy and Green Economy Act; and

"Whereas it is an affront to democracy to remove local input and authority from the decision-making process on matters that directly affect municipalities and property owners;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government change the necessary legislation and regulations to restore municipal planning authority on matters affecting their communities and property owners."

I agree with this petition and will hand it off to Alexandra.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives

and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010," an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as British Home Child Day.

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition entitled Haldimand-Norfolk Needs an OSPCA Chapter:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the establishment of a local Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) could help deal with the brutality and neglect of horses and other large animals; and

"Whereas the Ontario government could provide training for the Ontario Provincial Police to deal with animal abuse issues;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the Ontario government request the establishment of an OSPCA chapter in Haldimand-Norfolk to provide the two counties with support in cases of animal abuse and neglect."

I think that's a good idea, and I'll sign this.

VETERANS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I've been given this petition by one of my constituents. The petition says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas with turmoil and fighting around the globe, what better time to remember the price our veterans paid for freedom than the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II; and

"Whereas we also remember and honour our present-day veterans and all who have paid the ultimate price fighting for the freedoms we enjoy in this great nation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government declare November 11 a provincial holiday to honour our veterans of past and present; as well as all the soldiers of today who currently fight to defend our freedoms."

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition from my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

Premier McGuinty, "stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacies now."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to Emily, one of the pages.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Gabriella to send it down.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition to save medical laboratory services in Stayner, Elmvale and Tottenham:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I certainly agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Guelph. It is extremely short, but effective. It goes as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)." It's simple.

I support this petition and will affix my name to it.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense; and

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"Whereas while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

I shall sign this petition and send it to the clerks' table.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a number of petitions in support of Bill 100, paved shoulders on provincial highways. These are mainly from the Thunder Bay area. They read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I support this.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Emily to bring it to the clerks.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

OPPOSITION DAY

HYDRO CHARGES

Mr. Norm Miller: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls for the current balance and amount paid to date of the residual stranded debt be displayed in the annual report of the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. and on hydro bills so Ontario families will know how much longer they will pay the debt retirement charge.

That's addressed to the Minister of Finance.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has provided the motion and has a chance to speak to it.

Mr. Norm Miller: Premier McGuinty's energy experiments, from smart meters and time-of-use rates to the Green Energy Act and the Samsung subsidy, have electricity bills skyrocketing. Electricity rates are already up 75% under his watch. Adding the impact of the HST, backdoor energy taxes and other rate hikes, the annual cost of electricity bills for Ontario families is set to increase by a staggering \$732 by 2015. All the while, Ontario families, on every single electricity bill they get, are paying for the debt retirement charge.

The retirement charge is a dedicated revenue stream that pays for a debt stretching as far back as the Peterson era. In 2002, when Ontario families first started paying for the charge, the total bill for the residual stranded debt was \$7.8 billion. The debt repayment plan was scheduled to end in 2012, but under the McGuinty Liberals there has been very little transparency surrounding the debt retirement charge and how it pays down the residual stranded debt.

Almost all electricity users in Ontario pay the debt retirement charge on their electricity consumption, a cost of between \$5.60 and \$7 on the average monthly bill. To date, a total of \$7.8 billion has been collected from Ontario families, or about \$1 billion a year since 2002,

putting Ontario right on schedule to hit the 2012 target date of paying it off. Those same families are asking, "How much more do we have to pay?" The answer is, the Liberals have pushed back the repayment date twice, first to 2014 and now to 2015.

In response to skyrocketing electricity bills, the Premier announced that he was going to give Ontario families a small-drop-in-the-bucket credit, one year away from an election: the so-called Ontario clean energy benefit, a \$1-billion credit that will cost taxpayers more than \$1 billion to pay for. Of course, this is nothing more than an elaborate bait and switch, a shell game that takes money from one taxpayer to pay another. A better idea would be to actually pay off the debt and do away with the debt retirement charge. After all, the charges were supposed to pay for the \$7.8-billion residual stranded debt, the same amount of money they've collected to date.

If Premier McGuinty won't agree to retire the debt retirement charge, then he should come clean and tell Ontario families just how much they have paid to date and how much more they have to pay. Put the bill on the bill. Print the total paid and total owing in the annual report of the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.

But instead of coming clean and explaining the reason the electricity bills of Ontario families are skyrocketing, the McGuinty Liberals would rather conduct a campaign of misinformation. In fact, a confidential document from the Sussex Strategy Group, based upon government insider information, said that it would be necessary to confuse the public and the media about those costs. So they have a deliberate plan to keep Ontario families in the dark about the true costs of the Liberals' failed experiments and mismanagement.

That is why I'm bringing this motion forward today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak. Ontario families deserve to know where the debt retirement charge money went, they deserve to know how much more is owed, and they deserve to see what is remaining of the charge, printed in black and white, on each and every bill.

It is about transparency and accountability in electricity pricing. It is about simply telling Ontario families what they have paid so far and how much longer they will be paying the bill.

Instead of being transparent, instead of telling Ontario families just how much longer they will be paying the debt retirement charge, the McGuinty Liberals would rather try and confuse Ontario families.

It's time for Dalton McGuinty to come clean on the costs of his government's mismanagement. Release the amount of the residual stranded debt paid to date, tell us how much longer we will be paying the debt retirement charges, and come clean with Ontario families wondering where all their money went.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think that posting this information about the debt retirement charge on people's electri-

city bills makes a lot of sense. I think that people need to be aware of where that debt came from and how that debt is handled from year to year by the government of the day.

The report of the crown corporation set up by the government of Ontario in March 2000 identified that of the \$20 billion in debt that Ontario electricity consumers are paying for, \$15 billion of that came from nuclear power plants, either their overruns in initial construction or from the fact that those plants had stopped functioning 15 years before the end of their expected lifespan. Thus, people were stuck with a bill for these assets that weren't producing revenue.

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People in Ontario need to know that that stranded debt arises from a decision about a particular technology that was taken in this province and that proved to be extraordinarily costly. As you may well be aware, the Darlington nuclear power plant, which was planned at the end of the 1970s to cost somewhere in the \$3-billion to \$4-billion range, ultimately came in at a cost of about \$13 billion to \$14 billion. The cost of that plant was extraordinarily high. It was very expensive for the people of Ontario, very expensive for the ratepayers of Ontario.

When the Harris government looked at privatizing the power system at the end of the 1990s, they realized they couldn't sell those assets with those liabilities attached because no one would buy them. So that exercise in privatization, which I disagree with, led to an identification of the amount of debt that arose from that investment in nuclear power plants that could not be carried by the sale of power from those plants. That, when you pay your hydro bill, is your legacy from that adventure in nuclear investment. You are paying three quarters of that debt retirement charge to deal with the costs of dead nuclear. I think it's too late for me to amend this resolution, but it would be useful to have as a complete wording "the nuclear debt retirement charge line" on the bills and the explanation of how much is left to pay on those bills.

When you look at the history of the paying off of that debt, when the whole debt was set up, hived off from our hydro operations in 1999, the amount of debt was around \$19 billion that was going to be carried through those charges. That debt did not drop in the year 2000 or the year 2001 or the year 2002 or the year 2003 or the year 2004. It looks like in 2005 it still had not been addressed, even though the government had changed in 2003. That charge, which initially was for nuclear power, also included the cost of having a rate freeze here in Ontario. Much like the government of the day, the McGuinty government, money was borrowed to pay to write down electricity costs. It will be interesting to hear how the Liberal government deals with this resolution, because, in fact, just like the Conservatives they oppose, they are quite willing to borrow money to subsidize hydro bills. You know, they can attack, but given they are doing exactly what they are criticizing, I look forward to the ingenuity that they apply to their argument.

Today we had the opportunity to hear the Minister of Energy, Brad Duguid, bring forward his new energy plan.

For those who were there—journalists, the public, those who are interested in energy issues—to see that the Minister of Energy could, with a straight face, say that the cost of the nuclear investment in this province to meet his goals would be \$33 billion was quite an extraordinary thing. It's as if there is a complete amnesia about what happened in the years from 1960 to 2000. It was as if the debt retirement charge was something that was a distant, unknown entity, when in fact the Minister of Energy is proposing that we go down the same road we've gone down before, and, in my expectation and the expectation of many others, with the same result: a large cost overrun, expenses that will be a burden on the public sector and on the finances all of Ontario's economy for decades to come, for generations to come.

I think it's a very good idea to put this charge on the bills so that people know where it came from, know exactly why, or where the money that they're forking out is going to. Hopefully it will have a salutary effect. Hopefully, people who get those bills see that this nuclear debt retirement charge that they're paying every month is about to be refreshed with a whole new range of debt by the Liberal government.

The Minister of Energy said that the cost of his nuclear adventure would be \$33 billion. Everyone in this chamber who read the *Toronto Star* within weeks of George Smitherman, the former Minister of Energy, saying that we couldn't go forward, that he wasn't satisfied with the bids, is well aware that the only price we have that was acceptable to the government—because the bidder was willing to cover any overrun—was \$26 billion. That's for two reactors at the Darlington site. If that's what it costs for two new reactors at the Darlington site, then an estimate of \$33 billion to refurbish 10 reactors and build two new ones is a complete and total fantasy, and the debt retirement charge is a very cold and very sobering reminder of what the real costs of that technology are; the real costs that that technology presents.

We are responsible for representing the interests of the people of this province, for trying to safeguard their interests in the present and for many years to come. It's our responsibility to understand when we have made a major mistake; when we have seen a major mistake carried through and the consequences thrown on our shoulders and the shoulders of this economy, to not repeat that mistake.

So I would say having this further emboldening of the—sorry; English fails me for a moment. I would say that the highlighting of this particular item on energy bills, electricity bills, would make for great debate fodder throughout the province. People could go on open live radio shows and say, "Yes, that debt from the last round of nuclear expenses is what we can expect for the next round." People could go on television shows. They could talk to local journalists, community newspapers. They could talk to student journalists in community colleges and say, "Yes, that debt which is still outstanding, which you are still having to dig in your wallet or your purse to

find the money for, that debt came from nuclear power, and that debt alone is good enough reason for us to not go down that path again."

I think the Conservatives have actually done a service. I think in this resolution they have highlighted the folly of nuclear investment. They've highlighted the folly of continuing to see mid-20th-century technology as the be-all and end-all and have given all of us an opportunity to engage in a very good discussion with the people of this province.

If, in this province, we want to have electricity that is affordable, if we want in this province to have electricity investment that creates employment, that builds our economy, then one should look at the report brought out today by the Minister of Energy, his long-term energy plan, and look at the costs of conservation and efficiency, which are about 30% to 40% less than the price that he has put out for nuclear. So I ask you and I ask the people who are considering these weighty questions: Why on earth are we deciding to go down a path that has already cost us so much and burdened us so heavily when we can see in the government's own plan that there is an alternative that is far more cost-effective?

It is sometimes said that history repeats itself. It is sometimes said that those who do not follow history are doomed to repeat it. Today we have an interesting opportunity before us with this resolution to, in fact, look back at our history and do our best to avoid repeating it.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to join in the debate today for the opposition motion. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka wants to talk about residual stranded debt and the debt retirement charge. Well, I'm pleased to do that today.

In fact, I'd like to pick up on a comment that was just made by the member from Toronto-Danforth. It was George Santayana, actually, who said that if we don't remember the past, then we're condemned to repeat it.

I'd like to begin by saying that this government has a responsible long-term plan in place to retire all Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.—I'll refer to it as the OEFC—liabilities from within the electricity sector.

I do think that we need to look at a bit of the history, which the member from Toronto-Danforth was pointing out. I think it will be helpful, when we talk about a debt retirement charge, for the people of Ontario to understand the history of exactly the debt retirement charge.

On April 1, 1999, pursuant to the Electricity Act, 1998, Ontario Hydro was continued as the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.—or the OEFC, as I said—responsible for managing and retiring the outstanding debt. The debt retirement charge, or the DRC, of 0.7 cents per kilowatt hour came into effect on market opening of May 1, 2002. It was designed to be in place, to be paid to the OEFC, while a residual stranded debt exists, and it will be paid by electricity users until that debt is retired.

The debt retirement charge and the stranded debt are the legacy of years of poor energy policy and planning on

the part of both NDP and Conservative governments, who refused to tackle the difficult issues and artificially subsidized hydro prices on the backs of taxpayers and on the back of the Ontario treasury.

Looking back, so that we're not condemned to repeat those mistakes, the Tories more than doubled our reliance on coal, increasing climate change emissions by 124%. Under their government, 25% of our electricity came from dirty coal. Shockingly, the electricity system lost 1,800 megawatts of power capacity, which is the equivalent to Niagara Falls running dry.

Since taking office, our government has made long-overdue investments in the electricity system infrastructure that were needed in order to keep the lights on. Our government is phasing out coal-fired generation, replacing it with cleaner generation, improving the quality of the air that we breathe and reducing, of course, health care costs.

An interesting statistic, and I think that it's important for the people of Ontario to know this: Shutting down coal generation is equivalent to how many cars, do you think, Madam Speaker, being taken off the road? Again, shutting down coal generation is equivalent to taking how many cars off the road?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: How many? Tell us.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: How many? Seven million cars.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Seven million cars—wow.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Nicely done. Thank you.

How many? Seven million cars off the road is the equivalent to shutting down coal generation.

In order to have a clean, modern, reliable system, we need, of course, to continue to invest in Ontario's electricity system, and, of course, this government is doing that.

Rising electricity prices are having a significant impact on consumers, and I wanted to say that, while absolutely necessary, investments are increasing the cost of electricity.

I wanted to refer to an editorial in the Toronto Star today called "Duncan Message Refreshing." "Clean, reliable power costs money...." Finance Minister Dwight Duncan's piece was "refreshingly candid—'And, if people tell you that they can deliver clean, reliable electricity at a lower price, don't believe them.'"

Every little bit of assistance helps during these lean times. Our government has implemented or proposed several measures to help families and businesses cope with rising electricity costs, including the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which passed third reading in the House today and will allow tax relief for 50,000 new seniors who never saw tax relief on their energy and property taxes, and an increase in relief to 690,000 seniors in the province. That totals 740,000 seniors who will see a benefit of tax relief, as well as three million people in the province of Ontario, as well as the northern Ontario energy credit and the northern industrial electricity rate program, all of these things put in place to support—our government is taking further action to help mitigate electricity costs through the proposed OCEB,

the Ontario clean energy benefit, which would reduce after-tax electricity bills for eligible consumers by 10% for five years. The OCEB would help four million residential consumers, more than 400,000 small businesses and farms. A typical household would save more than \$150 a year, a small business would save more than \$1,700 a year and a farm over \$2,000 a year.

I could go on, and I'd love to, but my time is limited.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Oh, please.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: No, no, I mustn't. Well, okay, sure—just a couple more seconds.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: One more.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Okay, one more.

I did want to highlight that jobs will be created, of course, during all of this: the renewable energy projects, the direct employment, the construction. For instance, solar panel facilities in Guelph, 800 jobs; solar panel manufacturing facilities in Kingston, 1,200 jobs; a solar manufacturing hub in Welland, 1,000 jobs—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Wow, that's impressive.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I know. How exciting. And in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, Canadian Solar, with Shawn Qu, the chair, president and chief executive officer—I've had the pleasure of going through his facility—there are more jobs locally and across the province.

I'm going to leave it at that and reassure you that there is a plan in place, a comprehensive plan, one which will keep the lights on in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm standing in support of the opposition day motion of our finance critic, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, because this story needs to be told. I can only tell you this: There have been two clear admissions in the last week alone that the government has completely failed on the energy file.

I don't want this to come as a shock to consumers, because you're paying more and the smart meters demand that you use less. What we want is more accountability and more transparency. In fact, this is the cynical part of this. Madam Speaker, you've seen this report here, Renewable Energy Matters-Campaign Outline. This was by a consulting group, the Sussex group. This campaign, I think orchestrated by the Liberals, was found in a brown envelope, and our leader, Tim Hudak, got a hold of it. We want this to be out in the open. This was a campaign to confuse the consumers. The consumers are bewildered. Smart meters: The price is up, the price is down.

Now, in the few minutes I have, there were two bills over the last two weeks that have been debated in this House. Each of them was to reduce the cost of energy. One of those bills, Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit to make consequential amendments, is to reduce the cost of energy for seniors short-term. We supported that bill. The cost of that of bill is \$1.3 billion per year. This is with a government that's already got a

deficit of over \$18 billion. Secondly, our critic Mr. Miller has also pointed out that Bill 135, which is going to create a 10% reduction in the overall energy bill starting in January, is going to cost the taxpayers another billion dollars a year.

This is really bringing forward more debt to make it look like they're dealing with the energy problem. They have this problem so fouled up, it's unbelievable. This campaign has set out to confuse—and they still owe the \$7.8 billion. If you're looking for any more proof, just read the normal newspapers of the day. The Toronto Star this morning said, "Liberals Ready to Unveil the High Cost of Going Green." They go on here to say clearly that their plan has failed. That's what the article in the Toronto Star says, which is normally very friendly; we call it the Liberal briefing notes.

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The next one is from the National Post. It says, "Green Energy Costs Lowballed, Task Force Says." This report by the competitiveness and productivity economists—independent people—says that even the promise of 50,000 new jobs is a false promise, because it may create 50,000 jobs, but we're losing about 56,000 jobs in manufacturing and steel. Look at US Steel in Hamilton, as an example.

This whole plan, along with a number of other plans—it's frightening what they're doing to Ontario, especially seniors and people on fixed income. They're still stumbling to try and explain the political damage introduced by the hydro bill subsidy. You go along on this whole campaign here and you're pretty clear. All of the clips—new nuclear plants are being announced today. These plans that they're announcing today are very, very long-term. I compliment that. This is long-term, reliable, clean energy—nuclear. In my riding, I'm proud to be home to the Darlington plant, one of the plants that's going to be refurbished. That's a sound decision. But when I turn around and I see them making great news announcements about wind and solar energy at 80 cents a kilowatt hour—who are they fooling? They aren't telling us how they're going to pay for it. This is future debt. When you pay somebody 80 cents per kilowatt hour for a wind turbine that's not working half the time, give them a 20-year contract, and guarantee them that you will buy the power whenever they generate it—and that means you have to turn a nuclear plant off or a natural gas plant off—you're paying twice: You're paying the 80 cents plus the cost for nuclear or natural gas that you're turning off.

Our critic has it right: That opposition day motion needs to be voted on to make the people of Ontario at least aware of the mistakes the McGuinty government has made on this file.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and speak about this motion, to talk about the electricity issue in the province of Ontario. It's important to our government and important to the people of Ontario.

The member's outline about how we have to outline and tell the people of Ontario about the expenses and about the debt, that it should be reported on an annual basis—which happens on a yearly basis. The authority in charge of this issue annually reports how much debt we have and how much of the debt we have paid.

I want to say to all the people in the province of Ontario that, since we got elected in 2003 and up to now, we have paid more than \$5.7 billion of the debt. When the Conservative government was in power, they added to that debt almost \$1 billion, from \$19 billion to \$20 billion. As a matter of fact, they never invested a penny in generation or invested money in hydro to make sure all the electricity, all the lights stay on across the province of Ontario.

I'm delighted to get this opportunity to stand up in my place and speak about our energy plan, about our vision and about the strategy for the people of Ontario to make sure that every household has lights and that the lights stay on, and won't lose them for different reasons—because we don't have enough power to support the lighting system across the province Ontario.

At 2 o'clock today, our Minister of Energy outlined the vision of the government and the strategy of this government to make sure we have enough hydro to support all our facilities, our homes, our companies and our factories for many years to come. It's the only way to support the industry and attract more companies to come and open in Ontario. Without that vision, we don't have enough hydro or energy to attract companies to come to Ontario, exactly what happened in 2003 when we had a blackout across the province.

Interjection: Rolling blackouts.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, for many days and many weeks, because companies were afraid. They wanted to come to Ontario: "Do we or don't we have enough hydro to support our factory?" In the meantime, the price wasn't correct; they had an artificial price.

At the present time, the people of Ontario have a choice. People are paying for the price, paying for the debt and paying taxes—you have a choice: Either you pay it in the real price here or you pay it another way, in the debt. So which is the best: to be honest and upfront with the people of Ontario or hide the debt and not talk about it?

We have a plan. By the years 2015 to 2018, hopefully the debt will be paid by all of Ontario.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're not going to be here in 2015.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Whether I'm here or not, the people of Ontario will benefit from this achievement, from this plan.

Also, in support of this plan, we're paying a 10% rebate to Ontarians for the next five years to support them in going through that difficult time. We understand that the people of Ontario are going through a difficult time. We understand our duty and obligation to support the vulnerable people among us and our duty and obligation to support the companies, factories and industry to

be able to operate in Ontario on a daily basis and be able to open the door on a regular basis without being afraid of losing their hydro.

I know the opposition has no plan for hydro. They have no plan, no vision, for the future, whether Conservative or NDP, because you know what? I know they don't like wind, they don't like solar, they don't like hydro and they don't like nuclear. I'm not sure what they like. I don't understand so far.

I had the privilege to be in question period, and I heard a lot of the questions: "If you don't like nuclear, what do you like then? Do you like solar?" You don't like it either. "If you don't like solar, do you like wind?" You don't like it either. "Do you like renewable?" You don't like it either. You talk about, "This is expensive" and "This is not good for Ontario." In the meantime, they want hydro to be on all the time, so how can we provide hydro without investing in generation, whether nuclear or solar or wind or renewable?

The choice is to appeal to the people of Ontario. Either you are on the side of the people who can invest in your future or you are on the side of the people who do not care about anything, who are trying to hide all the prices and go into debt and tell people, "Yes, we'll give you a low price." But, look, you're going to pay the debt retirement forever because it's going to accumulate: more debt on top of the debt we have in the province of Ontario.

I'd be delighted to continue on but I want to leave room for many of my colleagues to speak about this important issue, because it's a concern to every part of the province. We want to talk to the people over and over, to tell them that we, the government of Ontario, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, are on your side to invest in your future, to continue to invest in clean energy—clear and clean energy, not dirty coal energy, because we care about your health and your future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakubuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on our opposition day motion today, presented by my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka, Mr. Miller:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls for the current balance and amount paid to date of the residual stranded debt be displayed in the annual report of the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. and on hydro bills so Ontario families will know how much longer they will pay the debt retirement charge. Addressed to the Minister of Finance."

When you've talked to people over this last couple of years but certainly even more pointedly over the last few months, if you talked to anybody about what's on their mind, about what is bugging them about the McGuinty government, hydro and electricity prices will be near the top or at the top of the list.

With respect to my colleague from London—Fanshawe, who waxed on about other people hiding the price, goodness gracious, it was the previous government that opened up the electricity bills so that people could

see what they were actually paying for and in what percentage of their bill. This government has done everything that they have been possibly able to do to obfuscate the actual facts around electricity. We had a Minister of Energy, George Smitherman—do you remember him? He promised that the Green Energy Act was going to add 1% per year to your electricity bills. That was the promise by George Smitherman, and obviously backed by Dalton McGuinty, the Premier. We find that to be just total silliness. It's nonsense. Now we have a government that is in full panic mode because of the mess they've made of this file.

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But when you talk to that electricity customer, one of the things about that hydro bill that bugs them the most is the debt retirement charge. They look at that bill and it's 0.7 cents per kilowatt hour, and they say, "Every month I'm paying this debt retirement charge. At least when I go to the bank and I've got a mortgage on my home or I'm doing a car payment or some other loan repayment, I can find out how much I still owe. I can find out how much longer I'm going to be paying at the current rate." But with this government, there's no disclosure.

The amount of this residual stranded debt in 2002 was—get this—\$7.8 billion. The amount that this government has collected since taking office, or that has been collected since 2002, part of it under the previous government, totals up to—now, listen to this again—\$7.8 billion, notwithstanding that there would be some interest involved here, but not \$7.8 billion. As near as we can get from the government, they are still going to be collecting this until at least 2015. That's another five years.

We've been at historic low interest rates in the past several years. There's no way on God's green earth that you can justify that kind of a payment schedule to the people of the province of Ontario who are getting whacked on their hydro bill every time they turn around. It's not just the debt retirement charge. It's the HST; it's the price they're paying for power. The total—I have to be careful with my words, Madam Speaker. The irony about this place is you can't accuse someone in this place of not telling the truth, and yet you can't compel someone to actually tell the truth. It is a kind of strange dichotomy, but that's the way it is. So they can say whatever they want on the other side and we really can't challenge them in the direct way we'd like to sometimes. Isn't that fascinating, Madam Speaker?

They've been saying all kinds of things about electricity and electricity rates and the future and what is going to happen, and all kinds of promises about the Green Energy Act and what it's going to mean to the consumer. But they've been caught. They've been caught. The reality is that they were hoping to get by these next few months and maybe just slip by the election, but the jig is up. Everybody knows now that they have not been forthcoming about what the cost of their so-called electricity plan is going to mean to the people of the province of Ontario.

They don't want to do any more disclosure as to what the actual balance of this residual stranded debt

retirement charge is, what the balance of that actual debt is. So we've tabled a motion in the House today, a very reasonable motion that I think could be supported by members of the government benches. All we're asking for is for this government, which I know has gone into its cocoon and its shell and is trying to just ride it out and avoid any possible disclosure of anything that might come back to bite them, as they say—they're just trying to ride it out and keep the wagons circled. We're asking them to disclose to Ontario consumers, who are getting whacked over the head with a sledgehammer by this government every time they turn around, where is the money? As Jerry Maguire would say, "Show me the money." Where's the money that you have been collecting for this debt retirement charge? The people in this province—it is their money. They have a right to know. It's about time.

The Minister of Energy had his press conference today. He's not talking about green energy anymore; he's talking about clean energy. They want to turn the dial, change the message a little bit. He's talking about his "clean" energy plan. Well, it's about time that this government came clean with the people of Ontario. For once and for all, let them know what they actually owe in this debt retirement charge.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to join in this unfortunately all-too-brief debate on this opposition day motion. New Democrats are supporting this motion. It's eminently reasonable, and I'd very much like to hear from a Liberal or two to explain why they wouldn't vote for it as well—just a couple.

This is a sad day when the government backbenchers fight so hard to avoid transparency, and I suspect at the same time to avoid being caught in the act. This government, with its chronic mendacity, again persists in concealing the real numbers—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw. They persist in concealing the real numbers—and flim-flams the hard-working—if only they were working—people of Ontario.

Why, just the other day, Thursday of last week, we had an economic statement and all the fanfare. You could hear the trumpets blaring and you could hear the triumphant march playing on somebody's CD player. The Minister of Finance strutted in here, Napoleonic. He took to his feet and gave his dramatic, albeit brief, discourse on what is the fall economic statement. I got the old highlighter out—you know, the yellow highlighter—and I recall him spouting that there would be 10% off your electricity bill every month, effective January 1, 2011. The backbenchers applauded. They had their cheerleading little dresses on and the pompoms. They were doing somersaults and balancing big red balls on their noses and the flippers were flapping. But, you see, the rest of the story had yet to be told, because if you go to the so-called background papers—this is the government's own

document, so you can bet your boots that if their numbers are skewed, they're skewed in favour of the government.

I shouldn't have used the word "mendacity"; I apologize. But I'll tell you, if Diogenes was in this room right now, he'd be spending an awful long time and walk out frustrated and discouraged. I can tell you that much.

So here we are. We've got page 11 of the papers telling us that over the next 20 years, electricity rates are expected to increase by about 3.5% a year. Ah, but turn the page, Speaker, turn the page: Over the next five years, residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46%. Wow.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: As the member points out, that was last week, that number—this is like the waistline of most MPPs: It tends to grow over the course of the weeks and months from the point of their election here. So from the point of the announcement last week, 46%—you can bet your bottom dollar it's going to be higher by the time you get into the first full year.

What kind of crummy deal is that? What kind of cheap shot from a cheap-shot government is that? It's desperate stuff. These guys are barely treading water. I wish the government House leader was here because I'd ask about that Johnny Cash song, "How high's the water, Mama?"

Mr. Randy Hillier: How high's the water, Mama?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's six feet high and rising.

See, you've got a crew over here, and the bilge pumps don't work any more. The bilge pumps don't work, and more and more gaps or seams along the hull of the ship are letting in more and more water. They're going under. We know that. Again, people are grabbing life preservers and grabbing the few lifeboats that are left and bowing out.

1650

Some of the reportage of that is, quite frankly, very amusing. You read the Toronto Star article, "Another McGuinty Liberal Bows Out." I read this verbatim: "Another insider said the next to depart will likely be MPP Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Scarborough East), who has confided to friends that he will not seek re-election."

I've got tell you, sir, those aren't very good friends, because they ratted you out. Think about it: He told his friends that he's not going to seek re-election. Your friends ratted you out. I suspect it was some of your colleagues in caucus, because that would be typical.

People suggest that somehow I'm cynical about these things, that somehow I'm jaded. Look, I came here a little while ago. I came here when I was skinny. I came here when I was young, when I was good-looking—quite frankly, I really was—when I had colour in my hair, when I had a spring in my step.

I got here long enough ago to watch an arrogant Liberal government, led by one Mr. Peterson, that had a huge majority. He had a bigger rump than you guys have got. It was a big-rumped government. And they went down the tubes. It was like that swirl; you could hear the flushing sound a mile away.

Then I watched, in 1995, another liberal government, Bob Rae's; the tsunami washed it away.

Then I watched Tories get elected in a huge sweep. And again, like some of you who were here, I watched them. By 2003 they had become out of touch. They had become arrogant. They had become aloof. They had taken to desperate measures, like telling people they were going to get a 10% cut in their electricity prices and not telling them that those prices were going to go up 46%.

I understand why the folks across the way are a little apprehensive. I understand why they don't particularly enjoy me saying these things. I don't say it to be cruel; I'm not a cruel person. I'm a kind person; I'm a caring person. I cry too. I feel for the despair of others. But I've got to tell you, as I've told you before, you can walk past the government caucus room now and you can smell the fear.

Look, here I go to my speaking notes. When 76% of Ontarians say they'd like to see another party in power, this party is in deep, deep trouble. When 86% of Ontarians say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago, this government's in deep, deep trouble.

When Ipsos Reid—I love the trend lines on that Ipsos Reid poll—puts the Conservatives at 41%, the Liberals at 32% and the NDP at 20%, I tell you, this government's in deep, deep trouble. That economic statement last week didn't give them the bump. They were told that in caucus, I suspect. Mind you, none of the backbenchers had any—by the way, if I do say anything unparliamentary, I withdraw in advance, Speaker. I want to make that clear. I withdraw, I withdraw, I withdraw. That's like three free ones, okay? So I get three withdrawals proactively, in anticipation. I just made a bank deposit on the credit side, okay? And if I say anything inappropriate, I apologize.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Take it one sentence at a time.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm doing my best.

When you take a look at this kind of polling, the problem is that there doesn't appear to have been any bump from last week's economic statement. It wasn't the lifeline that some of the—see, I understand spin. I may have done it a couple of times in my life myself. But the worst thing is when people spin themselves, and that tends to be what happens in government caucus rooms.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: They start believing their spin.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That tends to be what happens in government caucus rooms three and a half years into, as it is, a second term, when things have just gone flat, things have gone bad, things have gone south, things have gone sour, the milk has curdled, the orange juice is bitter.

Have you ever done that? Have you ever—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, you don't, because you're probably far more fastidious about your fridge than I am. Sometimes I think my fridge is like a square plastic and metal composter. But have you ever done that? You go to the fridge and you grab the little container of milk and you take a big gulp, and you realize—you look at the date and it expired three weeks ago. It's an awful feeling. But that's the sort of taste that it's in the mouths of the

shipmates on a ship that's in the tsunami and on the ship that's sinking.

I do want to mention something. I read a delightful thing today. Can I share this with you, Speaker? Can I change the tone here for just a minute? Because I realize I'm starting to get maybe a little bitter. I was just reading a review of a book that's going to be released in March 2011, *And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris*, by author Alan Riding, whom I don't know. It's a fascinating review, so delightful, and it's just heartwarming.

"Edith Piaf"—*La Vie en Rose*; *Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien*—"who said in 1940 that 'my real job is to sing, to sing no matter what happens,' was willing to perform twice in Stalag III-D, a camp for French prisoners-of-war outside Berlin—but on her first visit cleverly encouraged the camp commander to allow photographs to be taken of her with him and the POWs. The photos were then cropped so that each POW's image could be attached to counterfeit documents identifying him as a French worker in Germany. On Piaf's next visit to the camp, the documents were secretly delivered. If a POW escaped, he had a protective German ID card."

That was just a remarkable act by—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to return to the opposition day motion.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course I will return to the opposition day motion, but that was so touching. I just read that half an hour ago, and I thought it was a remarkable thing, because here is a woman who was accused by some historians of being not quite a collaborator, but a passive collaborator with the Germans. I just thought that was—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, that was her heir, Josephine Baker, who did that.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Oh, yes, you're right.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But, look, I was getting rather harsh. I was getting perhaps a little angry in how I was addressing government members, and I thought that would be a good distraction and I thought people would be interested in knowing. So I'm going to get the book when it's out, *And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris*, Alan Riding. There's a whole lot of other stuff in the review that talks about other, similar things, because it's about the cultural life.

But life for the Liberals has taken a turn for the worse. You know that, don't you, Speaker? And instead of their stupid, crummy announcements, that non-economic statement, that embarrassing economic statement of last week, and what I'm told was a whole lot of recycled stuff, including big, expensive nukes, today, you'd think that the Liberals would jump at the chance.

I'm actually amazed that the Conservatives put this motion on the order paper, I truly am, because they've given the Liberals an opportunity to redeem themselves. Do you understand what I'm saying? They've thrown the Liberals a lifeline. If Liberals supported this motion, because it would be Liberal backbenchers, the public, the

people in the ridings of members who supported it, would say, "If my member is a Liberal, and I know the polls say what they say, and maybe I was polled myself and contributed to that poll result that says that 76% of respondents, Ontarians, say they would like to see another party in power"—now, you know that if next week a poll comes out and says that only 75% of respondents say they would like to see another party in power, these guys are going to claim victory. But if a poll comes out and says that 78% of respondents say they would like to see another party in power, these guys are going to claim that it was a rotten pollster.

Mind you, back to the Ipsos Reid poll, I understand that this is the same pollster that put George Smitherman neck and neck with Rob Ford, so I don't know. I'm waiting for a subsequent poll to verify or validate that one. What's interesting about the Ipsos Reid is the trend lines and the GTA and eastern Ontario. Wow. That means that you're not just talking Cornwall and my good friend Senator Runciman's Leeds-Grenville riding. When you get poll numbers like that, you're talking about getting up into Ottawa and places like that—I suppose the neighbours of the member for Nepean-Carleton.

1700

What's a government backbencher to do? Prepare a resumé? Perhaps. It's too late to cross the floor. Nobody will have them at this point; they're damaged goods. They're bruised and battered and they've not demonstrated the sort of courage of conviction that people ought to have if they're going to serve here in this Legislative Assembly and serve the people of Ontario. Because folks down where I come from are hurting, and one of the things that's squeezing them most—the opposition House leader borrowed a line from my NDP colleague from Trinity-Spadina; he said that these people are getting whacked. You've heard Marchese say that, haven't you? And people are; people are getting hammered. Then this Liberal government comes to them and says, "Suck it up, because if you think this is bad"—this is what Mr. McGuinty, in effect, tells the people of Ontario. He says, "If you think this is bad, it's only going to get worse." Then he has the audacity to say, "If you think this is bad, it's only going to get worse, but vote for me and my people." What? Is somebody nuts? Why would you vote for somebody who is going to make things worse for you? Why would you vote for somebody who is actually going to promise that your electricity rates are going to go up 46% minimum—mark my words: minimum, minimum, minimum—and you're going to pay HST on every penny of that 46% increase.

And, ah, the leader of the NDP, Ms. Horwath, let the cat out of the bag yesterday, didn't she? Because she asked the government during question period, "How is it that in your legislation that you say is going to reduce electricity rates by 10%, even though they're going to go up by 46%"—it's going to reduce them by 10%, even though they'll go up by 46%. How is it that in that same legislation the government has the power to unilaterally,

without ever coming to this chamber, kill the program, to terminate it? It's only a five-year program. Understand that: It's not a permanent program; it's only five years. The government's legislation, the legislation it introduced last Thursday, gives it the power to unilaterally, through regulation, in the darkness and secrecy of the locked-door cabinet room, kill that five-year program at any point in time or to reduce the 10% to 9% or 8% or 7% or 6% or 5% or 4% or 3% or 1% or 0.5%.

This gang of Liberals has taken the people of this province for suckers. Good grief. Have they no shame, or are they just so out of touch? Do they not go to their farmers' markets on Saturday mornings? Do they not go to the church basements on Sunday afternoons for the dinners?

I was at St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Catholic Church down on Harriet Street in Welland last Sunday night for their annual parish feast. Father John Sloan, who has just turned 80, by the way—a wonderful man. That's my home parish. That's where I was, as a kid, baptized, christened. It's an aging parish. It's a Ukrainian-Slovak parish. I talk to folks there. These are hard-working people; these are proud people; strong people. But they're in their 60s and 70s and, like Father Sloan, 80s, and others—one of the priests there is 94 years old. These people, yes, are part of the 86% of Ontarians who say it is harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. They're not slothful, they're not careless with their money.

What's this government doing, telling people to get up at 4 in morning to do their laundry, or to take their bath with the electric hot water tank, or to roast a side of beef? Or telling the kids to stay up until 1 in the morning to do their homework so that they don't get whacked by Mr. McGuinty's not-so-smart—quite frankly, very stupid—meters, which don't save any electricity and which have jacked up electricity prices for consumers across this province, including the folks who were down there at St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Catholic Church for their parish feast last Sunday night.

Malcolm Allen, the federal member of Parliament, was there with Peggy, his wife, and a whole lot of people; some of them I've known for my whole life, of course. A whole lot of the eastern rite clergy were there. Maria Papp from the Hungarian Presbyterian Church was there and a whole lot of parishioners—good folks, just plain folks, hard-working folks; as I say, folks who aren't careless with money; folks who learned a long time ago to turn the light off when you leave a room; folks who learned a long time ago to turn the furnace down a few more degrees at night because you're in bed with blankets covering you; folks who also know full well that if you have babies crawling around on the floor, little babies crawling still before they're walking, you can't afford to turn the heat down to 62 degrees or 65 degrees because it's cold on the floor. Hot air rises, and the floor is cold. With little babies crawling on the floor, you can't turn the heat down to 62 degrees. What's Mr. McGuinty thinking? If you're 90 years old, things start to get a little

chillier, too. You can't turn the heat down to 62 degrees when you're 90 years old because you just feel the cold a little more than you did when you were younger. So what the heck is Mr. McGuinty thinking when he tells people who are 90 years old, "Turn the heat down," or, quite frankly, "Turn it down during the day, because that's when we're really going to hammer you. We're going to mug you. We're going to roll you. We're going to grab you by the ankles, shake every last nickel and dime out of you."

What is he thinking? Because he's sure as heck not thinking of the folks of Ontario. He sure as heck ain't thinking about the folks who were down there at that parish feast at St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Catholic Church on Harriet Street in Welland; or, for that matter, the people who were at the Canadian Corps on Saturday afternoon in Thorold, where the ladies' auxiliary celebrated its 75th anniversary. That's a more mature crowd as well, with a view few veterans left in it, too.

Heck, I'm going to bring a speech with me next week and sneak it on to the record somehow. There was a wonderful guest speaker, a retired sergeant, who was born in 1923 and, in 1941, joined up. He was 18. He was part of the liberation of Holland. When that was done, he volunteered for the Pacific. He hadn't had enough yet. When I see somebody like him—a veteran who's fought hard, worked hard, saved hard, lived honestly, done all the right things—when I see a fellow like him in his senior years as a retiree living on a pension that's eroding, seeing savings evaporate, and I see him being squeezed by this government, I've got to tell you, it leaves me with far more than distaste. It leaves me with outright disgust.

So, people, the good news is that 11 months from now, you can vote these people all the way to oblivion. That's the good news.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion as well.

I'm sitting here reading Ontario's long-term energy plan, listening to the debate, and I find it very astonishing. I can't believe that this motion is actually brought forward by the official opposition, given that they are the ones who are responsible for this debt retirement charge. They are the ones who are responsible for the stranded debt that Ontarians—you and I—who consume electricity, who get a bill, are paying for. So I find it very interesting that they have the gall to actually bring this particular motion forward, knowing full well that they are the ones responsible, that they are the ones who neglected our energy system in the past. They're the ones who did not charge the true cost of electricity, which is what we need to pay, resulting in this massive debt, which we now have to pay over time.

1710

What are we talking about? I think the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, when she was speaking earlier,

talked about those numbers and their worth, reminding us that we were left with over \$20 billion—\$20.5 billion, to be exact—in terms of stranded debt. This is money that was left on the whole hydro infrastructure—not to mention artificial caps on electricity prices, which resulted in about \$1 billion in extra debt for consumers. It's our debt; it's nobody else's debt. We're the ones who pay this particular debt.

What we've been doing, through the debt retirement charge, which we all see on our bills—and, yes, it is the number one complaint we hear. When my constituents in Ottawa Centre come and talk to me in my constituency office, they want to know what this debt retirement charge is. They want to understand where this is coming from and why they are paying. And when you explain it to them, they say, "Oh, yeah." They remember the mismanagement by the past government that took place. They remember the exercise to privatize the electricity system in this province, and that botched effort. Then they tried to deregulate the electricity system, and that kind of backfired. Then they tried to put a price cap so that they could mollify people. They remember that very clearly.

Just last Saturday, I hosted a hydro information session in my riding of Ottawa Centre, simply because I wanted to make sure, as people are concerned—and rightly so—that they'll be able to understand why electricity prices, hydro prices, are going up. We organized this hydro information session in my riding, in Westboro. We invited Hydro Ottawa to talk about the bills, smart meters, time-of-use pricing, what a debt retirement charge is, and how the whole electricity system works, because I think we'll all admit it is quite complicated.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Too complicated for you guys.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Well, you may be smarter than me, sir, but it is complicated. I think it is our responsibility to ensure that every citizen understands how the system works. I think sometimes we think that electricity generation is as simple as just flicking a switch on and off. We know it's more complicated than that.

Also, we had representation from EnviroCentre, a not-for-profit conservation group in my riding, to talk about how consumers can reduce their consumption and conserve more.

Anyway, what was interesting in that session was that most of the people who came were seniors—it was great that there was an opportunity to speak with them—and they were not angry. I will be honest with you: I was ready for some anger. They were not angry, but they had questions. Anxiety? No doubt. They were actually very happy at the end of the day that there was an elected representative who was able to be present to answer their questions. We worked collaboratively together to ensure that they understand where we were, what kind of neglect took place within our system, where we are going, what kind of investments we are making today and what our future is when it comes to having a stable, reliable and clean energy system—very important. I have to tell you that they want a clean energy system.

Talking to seniors is very instructive, because they will tell you they do want to leave a cleaner environment for their grandchildren—no ifs, ands or buts about it. One thing we know about our parents and our grandparents: They are not selfish. I think we'll all agree to that. They want their government to make those kinds of investments.

The stranded debt: That is one question that keeps coming up again and again—\$20 billion left by the previous government; \$5.8 billion, almost \$6 billion, paid since 2003; roughly about \$14 billion remaining, which should be paid by 2015. Since 2006, this government has been paying—not this government, actually; it's the ratepayers. Those who pay for electricity have been paying \$1 billion a year toward this stranded debt, that was left by the previous government.

Here's another legacy issue which I think people understand: When you are not investing in your electricity infrastructure, you're neglecting it. And when you're neglecting it, essentially what you're doing is that the system is becoming poor, it will crumble and it's inefficient. People understand that. It's like having your car. If you don't maintain your car, after a while it's going to fall apart. The same thing with your house: If you're not going to make sure that you do the regular upkeep on your house—don't change the shingles on the roof, don't look after the foundation—it is going to crumble.

The electricity system is no different. In fact, if anything, it's more complicated. What the previous governments did by not charging the true price of electricity—they had no money to invest back in upgrading the infrastructure. We have a system which became highly inefficient. We lost electricity in transmission, so that was an absolute waste. We had a system which relied on coal, because it is the cheapest way of producing energy, but it is also the dirtiest way of producing energy, and that results in bad air, asthma in our children and other respiratory diseases. That's what happens when you don't have money. That is what our government, the McGuinty government, has been focused on since 2003: to ensure that we reinvest in our aging hydroelectricity system, whatever you want to call it, to rebuild the system, to make sure the system is able to grow, to put more generation.

What's most important, something I hear again and again in my riding of Ottawa Centre, is that people do not want electricity out of coal. That's one thing they do not want. They want coal to be phased out. I find it very astonishing, I get extremely surprised when I hear the official opposition saying that coal is the way to do it. There's something called clean coal; I think they've used that term in the past. There is no such thing as clean coal. Putting scrubbers on stacks is not going to make coal and the emissions somehow clean or pure. It is dirty. Yes, it's cheaper to make electricity, but it is dirty, and the long-term costs on our health infrastructure and on our personal health are extremely high. What we need do is get rid of that. We need to invest in renewable sources of energy. We need to invest in wind, solar, biogas and biomass, those types of technologies.

I can only speak for my riding. When I go door to door in my riding of Ottawa Centre, that is one thing I'm asked again and again: What kind of investment is the McGuinty government making in renewable sources of energy? Because that's what they want to see. I think they understand and know that that is more expensive. That is why we will continue to invest.

I was just reading Ontario's long-term energy plan, which the Minister of Energy just announced today, looking at the next 20-year horizon. That is the kind of very forward-looking plan he is presenting to ensure that not only do we have capacity in our system in the long run—and I hope we have the type of capacity where we can export energy and sell it to other jurisdictions, because there will be more demand for cleaner sources of energy; and we can sell that electricity at a premium price down south to our American cousins—but also enough stable, reliable and clean supply to ensure that our economy continues to grow.

That's our effort. We're not only cleaning up the mess which was left by the previous government, we are also building for the future. That's something I think we should be proud of, and I am extremely supportive of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to speak to this resolution. It was interesting, as always, to hear the history lesson from the previous speaker. Of course, what intrigued me the most was that he was willing to admit that the number one complaint he receives as an MPP in his constituency office is, of course, regarding hydro issues and hydro bills. It sort of reinforces the value of what we're bringing forward and debating this afternoon with this resolution.

I'm doing double duty here today because the social policy committee of which I am a member is talking about Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector. In some ways, it's very appropriate that we have some crossover. In one committee we're talking about the value of expanding public accountability and transparency and actually opening up those books and value for the constituents and the people of Ontario, and yet what I'm hearing from the Liberal members is, "We don't want to do anything more with hydro bills. There is no reason why hydro consumers should need to know what the debt retirement charge is."

1720

I can tell you, the phone calls I receive, the visits I get and the emails talk about, "I understand that there is a debt retirement charge, and I want to know how much is left." It's a very simple request. I've spent a lot of my time dealing with Hydro One and all of the various hydro agencies trying to get a hard number on what that is. Quite honestly, they don't want to provide it. They, for whatever reason, either under the direction of the minister or for their own protection, are not prepared to release that number. I find it very frustrating as an MPP

who is trying to serve her constituents, to get those numbers for them, because it's often requested of me.

There are some emails that I actually wanted to reference in relation to this debate. This is just a quick one from my riding. I'll read an excerpt:

"The electricity supply system for this province is too important to have been in the hands of McGuinty, Duncan, Smitherman and their cronies.

"Their policy to satisfy the electrical energy demands of the province amounts to little more than increasing the rates drastically, plus HST, and spending PR money to convince the population that it is a green 'culture change' that is good for us, helping the environment, for instance.

"What they have done to reduce our standard and quality of living"—lots in this case.

"Did you know Canadians use more electricity per head than Europeans?" Well, of course. Look at the "winter and summer degree day deviations." And on it goes.

There's another one which I found quite amusing. They talked about the frustration of dealing with the Ontario Power Authority and Hydro One—who has the number and who's willing to release the number. The last comment is talking about the value of conservation, that in the minister's response, "He seems to recommend you modify your lifestyle to become a night person," which, of course, is what we have been talking about regularly. Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative Party have raised the issue regularly about the time-of-use meters and how they are going to impact people in our society who do not have the option of changing their lifestyle to begin at 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. at night. Seniors come to mind and, of course, as the Comsoc critic, I must always raise individuals who have a disability and perhaps are working out of their home, or living out of their home, more often.

This is one that actually just came this morning: "It would be really nice if you synchronized some of your programs. On one side you are encouraging everyone to become energy-wise, which is a good thing. On the other hand, the way you bill for hydro does not reward those that do make the effort. Specifically, charging high 'delivery' fees means that we are not paying for how much we use but rather just because we have a wire coming to our residences." And then he goes on to describe how, in one of his hydro connections—and this happens many times in this agricultural community. You are paying far more for the delivery charge than you ever are for the hydro cost. It doesn't matter how much you are able to conserve. You are still getting dinged very dramatically with the delivery charges and, of course, the HST, and on and on we go.

I see I've been told that I have to wrap up because we have a number of speakers who would like to raise this.

To me, this is about transparency. If we want to have more transparency in our government agencies, in our hospitals, then why can't we have it in our hydro bills?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to speak on this motion for a little while concerning stranded debt and debt retirement charges.

Like my colleague from Ottawa Centre, I was actually quite surprised to see that this was the subject of a motion being brought forward by the Conservatives because, to me, this whole issue of stranded debt and debt retirement charges is actually symbolic of why the Conservative energy policy was a failure. But if they want to talk about it, hey, we can go with the program.

Now, what we need to understand when we talk about energy policy by the Conservatives and the NDP is that there was this great myth. The great myth was that you could have cheap hydro, you could have cheap electricity. The only problem was, it wasn't actually true. As a result of that, the debt of Ontario Hydro, the old utility which did everything in Ontario, went up to \$20 billion. It went up to \$20 billion. It kept growing and growing because we, as consumers, were paying this price that didn't actually reflect the cost of doing business. As a side effect, nobody actually ever fixed the generators or fixed the transmission lines, but that's another issue.

So here we were with this huge big debt. The Tories knew that it wasn't working very well, and they thought, "Well, gee, we'll just fix all this by selling it to private companies." They started to talk to the private companies. Do you know what they discovered? Nobody wanted to buy a company that had \$20 billion worth of debt. So they thought, "Well, gee, we're going to have to find somewhere to park this debt." So they set up a corporation, whose name I can never remember, the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., because the only purpose of this corporation is to have \$19 billion—let's be fair. It was \$19.4 billion I think at the time they set up the corporation.

Nobody wanted to buy Ontario Hydro with \$19.4 billion worth of debt, so they set up this sort of funny corporation to have the debt and all the other liabilities from Ontario Hydro. They said, "We have a wonderful scheme. We're going to put this on consumers' bills. The consumers didn't have to pay for it in the past, but the consumers in the future will pay for all this artificially cheap electricity that they consume. The new consumers can pay for that." That's how this debt retirement charge got on the bills.

Now, you would have thought that, having set that up, the Tories would—because they set this up in 1999, when they were still there—actually have used the money that was coming in to consumers to start paying down the debt. But no, they didn't do that. It went up by another \$1 billion, so that by the time the Tories left government in 2003, it was up \$1 billion and we had \$20.5 billion worth of debt for future Ontarians who buy electricity to pay down for electricity that was consumed in the past.

Now, one of the things that was really interesting about this was the way they really sort of boondoggled consumers. They parked the debt. They thought about trying to sell these off, and now they're asking us, "So

what's the real situation?" Well, let me tell you the real situation.

Let me tell you what we have done. We have paid off \$1,000,070,000 in 2006; \$1,000,004,000 in 2007; \$1,000,064,000 in 2008; \$1,000,043,000 in 2009; \$1,000,372,000 this year and projected another billion dollars that we're going to get rid of next year.

But the other thing that's really, really interesting is, you know that \$1 billion that it went up? It's really interesting to know where that \$1 billion came from, because the Conservatives had another hare-brained scheme, which was that they were going to totally deregulate electricity. Of course, by then, all we had were coal-fired generators, because they had let everything go to rack and ruin. We were buying it from the States. When they deregulated the price of electricity, it shot up a matter of 30% in a few months, and consumers were really angry. You should have heard them. I was going door to door at the time. They were really angry. So the Tories panicked. They artificially capped electricity at 4.3 cents, and it cost \$1 billion extra to buy the hydro we were consuming. That's why the debt went up, and we're still paying for that cap that was total fiction.

This is nonsense. I'm not buying a Tory energy policy.
1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's great to do this.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Give 'em hell, Lisa.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My colleague from Welland says, "Give 'em heck"—

Mr. Peter Kormos: I said, "Give 'em hell."

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You used a non-family-friendly term. It's okay.

The previous Speaker from the Ontario Liberal Party was talking about hare-brained schemes, and I can tell you something: Hare-brained schemes are what are ruling the day by this Liberal government.

Today my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Norm Miller, has put forward a very sound motion, a reasonable motion, one that calls for transparency and accountability and making sure that the debt retirement charge is transparent to Ontario families—and how we're paying down this residual stranded debt.

Presently in Ontario—and this is why he has brought this forward—it is unclear what the residual debt is, even though to date, Ontario taxpayers have paid \$7.8 billion toward the residual debt that's been collected—or we believe it's been put toward the residual debt.

Let me put this into perspective. My colleague opposite even acknowledged this: \$1 billion per year has been paid toward this debt, or we think, since 2002. This McGuinty Liberal government has consistently pushed back the date to pay this debt off. First they said it would be 2014, and now it is 2015. This is not a surprise to us. This is the Liberal government that told us they would close coal-fired generated plants by, I believe it was 2007. Then it was 2011. Then it was 2014. They don't

get it done. They make promises that they can't keep or don't intend to keep. That's why my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the entire Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus are standing here today asking for transparency in that \$1 billion per year that Ontario taxpayers and Ontario families have been paying toward the stranded debt.

Almost every electricity user in the province of Ontario is paying the debt retirement charge on their electricity consumption, and there is no transparency. Ontario families are left to continually pay the bill without any knowledge whatsoever on where that money is going, and if there's any relief in sight. They have no idea.

Let me put this into perspective as well. This equates to about \$7 per bill per family, plus the HST on hydro bills. In addition to that, they're actually paying for their electricity plus the HST again. Ontario families have had enough.

In fact, in my hand I have correspondence from the people that I represent in Nepean–Carleton, who have had it up to here with this Liberal government and their expensive energy schemes, and their inability to pay down the stranded debt while they continue to hide it from us.

Let me read this: "I just opened my monthly hydro bill. They have increased my billing plan amount by 50%. These increases are outrageous considering that about half the bills have nothing to do with the amount of electricity you use, but it is debt reduction—and there are millions sitting in that fund—delivery charge and HST."

Another: "I am completely outraged at what McGuinty is doing with hydro and how he is effectively treating us like fools. I fear he will announce removal of the debt reduction charge, thinking it's the pacifier for the people, while failing to handle this properly."

Another one: "I'm writing this email because I am concerned about the rise in hydro rates and the current Liberal government planning further rate hikes. It's their responsibility to lessen the load on the middle class."

A further email comes from my riding: "To spend money on expensive hydro production by green methods and wind power is wrong, especially when we in Ontario could buy power cheaply from the province of Quebec."

This comes from my riding as well: "I write to you today to express my dismay at the course of action the government has chosen to take in regards to energy costs. Furthermore, the headlines in today's Citizen trumpet the fact that Ontario is now going to borrow another billion dollars to subsidize or reduce hydro rates for Ontario taxpayers. Isn't this just having the taxpayer pay from the left pocket rather than the right?"

This is the problem. There is little transparency surrounding the debt retirement charge and how it is paying the residual stranded debt. It's unclear what the residual stranded debt is today. We know that \$7.8 billion has been collected from my constituents and from constituents right across Ontario to pay this down, yet this crowd opposite, this Liberal government, continues to mismanage tax dollars, and we don't know what that

stranded debt is today. That's why my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka had the foresight to bring this forward, so that we in Ontario and the constituents we represent would have an idea of what they are paying, how long they'll be paying it for, and when they will finally be free from the burdens of this Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have six minutes left on the clock today to speak on this opposition day motion. Like many of our members on this side of the House, I guess I'm wondering a little bit why the official opposition, the Conservatives, would use their last opposition day motion of the session to speak on this file, given the history that they have as a party with mis-managing it in such a gross way, which they did from 1995 to 2003. It's a little bit, I would say, like leading with your chin.

Speaker, I want to read into the record a few things for you. But first, we've heard mentioned a few times from the opposite benches about the issue of transparency. I'm going to read this for you: "The projections in its 2009 annual report indicate that the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp."—the corporation set up by the Conservatives when they were the government of the day—"will be in a position to offset its liabilities in the years ranging from 2015 to 2018, at which time the debt retirement charge will end." It appears that there is reporting going on in this regard already. The numbers are in the annual report from the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., set up by you when you were in government.

But there are a few specific points that I want to read into the record when it comes to the debt retirement charge, and to make sure the people in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan are aware of this. The charge was slapped on everybody's energy bill in 1999 as a result of the policies of the government of the day at the time: the Conservative government, when they were in power from 1995 to 2003. It began in 1999. From 1999 to 2003—and this one's a beauty—the PC government actually added to the stranded debt. It rose by \$1 billion over those four years, from \$19.4 billion to \$20.5 billion.

I know it went up by \$1 billion in those four years, but what I don't know is how much you collected during those four years—but you did collect, because you put the debt retirement charge on people's bills in 1999. So not only were you collecting for four years the charge that you instituted, but the debt went up in those four years; it didn't go down. It went up by \$1 billion. Where did the money you collected in those four years go? The debt didn't go down while you were collecting it; it went up. Contrast that to our government: The debt's been going down by about \$1 billion a year over the last six years.

The stranded debt is currently \$5.7 billion lower than it was in 2003. By paying down \$5.7 billion, we're saving the taxpayers of the province of Ontario \$408 million a year in interest expense. I don't know how

much was costed to us by the former government when they let the debt increase even while they were collecting the debt retirement charge. I don't know where that money went. I would sure like to know. The Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. is projecting the debt to be paid down by another \$1 billion this fiscal year.

1740

To summarize: To date, \$7.8 billion has been collected under the debt retirement charge, and \$5.7 billion has been used to pay down the principal. Those are numbers that I haven't heard anybody dispute. They sound like they're beyond the point of debate.

There are costs associated with some of the things that we're doing on energy. Nobody on this side of the House has ever disputed that.

Just this morning, I had the opportunity, in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, along with my colleague Michael Gravelle, to make a tremendous announcement, an announcement that was committed to by all three political parties in the 2003 election; that is, that they would all go off coal. All three parties said it: Ernie Eves, the leader of the PCs, said it; Howard Hampton, when he was the leader of the NDP, said it; and our leader, Dalton McGuinty, said it. And we're doing it: five coal plants in the province of Ontario; two of them were in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

In August just past, I had the great pleasure of announcing that the Atikokan generating station will be converted to biomass, creating construction jobs, saving 100 jobs in that plant, saving 40% of the municipal tax base for the town of Atikokan, and on it goes, potentially creating another wood products industry in northwestern Ontario as a result of that decision. We did that—the first plant to be converted to biomass, I believe it's fair to say, in the history of the province of Ontario. That was the first one in my riding that we converted. Everybody said they were going to consider doing it. We've done it. That costs some money. Are they telling me over there that they don't want to do that?

Then, this morning in Thunder Bay, the second coal-fired generating station that's in my riding: My colleague Michael Gravelle and I announced this morning that the Thunder Bay generating station will be converted to natural gas. We're going to save both those plants.

Both of those are things that I'm very proud of. I'm very proud of having accomplished that in the riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan. It's going to save a lot of jobs, it's going to save a lot of tax base, it's going to create a lot of construction jobs, and that list goes on.

Are the people across the aisle telling me that they're not interested in that? Remember, in 2003 you committed to it, your party committed to it. There's a cost associated with it. Are you going to roll back on it? Are you going to say you don't support it now?

I heard my colleagues speaking earlier. At some point, somebody please tell me what kind of generation you're interested in. You don't like nuclear. You don't like wind. You don't like solar. You don't like hydraulic. I don't know what it is you like. You say gas is too expensive. You've got to pick something.

From 1990 to 1995—everybody has a record—under the NDP, it went up by 40% in five years. They cancelled conservation programs. They didn't replace it with anything. They cancelled Conawapa, a great deal from Manitoba that was set up by the David Peterson government in the late 1980s. We would have had energy at four cents a click forever. They got rid of it. As well, the Conservatives artificially capped the price of power in 2002, I believe it was, at 4.3 cents, and the Conservatives hid the true cost of that energy in the debt retirement charge, the very thing that we find ourselves speaking about today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I think it's important, after listening to the Liberal members, that we cut through all the Liberal BS that we've heard from these guys today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask you to withdraw that.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

It's plain to be seen by everyone how valuable this opposition day motion is. We're looking to have the current balance and the amount paid of the residual stranded debt put on the bill of hydro consumers so that they know what it is that they're paying, how much they're paying and how much this Liberal government is either paying or not paying off the debt. This is very simple, very clear.

I know the member from Ottawa west, the president of the Liberal Party, has a little problem. I think he mentioned that hydro was complicated and they were having difficulties with this.

This is not a complicated procedure. Put down how much is owed, how much has been received and what the remaining debt is. Let's just get the facts clear. This Liberal government has collected \$7.8 billion from the consumers of this province to pay off a debt of \$7.8 billion, and they refuse to say if they've paid any of that debt off. We've asked them questions every day for the last week or two and they refuse to answer the question.

Why is that? Why do they refuse to answer the question? I would imagine we would find the answer here in the Liberal Renewable Energy Matters—Campaign Outline, developed by Sussex Strategy. It's marked "Privileged and confidential," but right there on page 1 of their renewable energy campaign, it says, "In this, it will be critical to 'confuse' the issue in the political/public/media" arenas "away from just price...." This is intentional, what they're doing. This is why they are blocking this motion. They are speaking and opposing it because they are attempting to confuse the people of this province on what they're actually doing with that money—and that is the question: Where is the money? You've collected \$7.8 billion and nobody knows where it went. All we do know is that this debt that was due to be paid off in full in 2012 is now expected to be paid off in 2018—if we can believe what these guys are saying, even though their strategy is to confuse.

Who believes them? Nobody. That's \$7.8 billion, and what do the taxpayers and the ratepayers of Ontario get for it? A big goose egg. That's what Ontario ratepayers have gotten from this Liberal government: nothing.

But maybe others have. Look at what's happened at Hydro One. In 2003, there were 1,300 people making over \$100,000; in 2009, there are now 2,584 people making over \$100,000. And how about the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board? In 2003, six people made over \$100,000 at that agency; last year they had 96 people making over \$100,000—from six to 96. The Ontario Power Authority went from six people making \$100,000 in 2005, and in 2009, that number went up to 75, a twelvefold increase.

We have seen decades of mismanagement of Ontario Hydro. That is clear. Everybody in this province knows that it has gone on for decades and decades. But what we're not used to is this government, the government of the people of Ontario, hiding \$7.8 billion. We can understand the mismanagement at Ontario Hydro, but for elected representatives not to come clean and tell the people what they're doing with their money is just unacceptable. That is nothing but skulduggery, that is nothing but odoriferous, noisome reports coming out of this, and it is, like I said at the very beginning—that I had to withdraw, and I can't say that word.

But the member from Welland put it clearly. He talked about what this Liberal government is doing: \$7.8 billion and the people of Ontario get nothing from them. We want to see the current balance and the amount paid on the hydro bills of the people of Ontario, just like they would get on a mortgage statement from their bank. If any bank conducted themselves like this Liberal government, they would be up on fraud charges for failing to disclose how much had been paid on mortgage accounts. That's what you guys are doing. It is a criminal action.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Miller, Parry Sound—Muskoka, has moved opposition day motion number 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour, please rise one at a time until recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed, please rise one at a time until recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
 Arthurs, Wayne
 Balkissoon, Bas
 Bartolucci, Rick
 Bradley, James J.
 Broten, Laurel C.
 Brown, Michael A.
 Brownell, Jim
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Caplan, David
 Carroll, Aileen
 Chan, Michael
 Chiarelli, Bob
 Colle, Mike
 Crozier, Bruce
 Delaney, Bob

Dhillon, Vic
 Dickson, Joe
 Fonseca, Peter
 Gerretsen, John
 Gravelle, Michael
 Hoskins, Eric
 Jaczek, Helena
 Jeffrey, Linda
 Johnson, Rick
 Kular, Kuldeep
 Lalonde, Jean-Marc
 Leal, Jeff
 Matthews, Deborah
 Mauro, Bill
 McMeekin, Ted
 McNeely, Phil

Meilleur, Madeleine
 Milloy, John
 Naqvi, Yasir
 Pendergast, Leeanna
 Phillips, Gerry
 Papatello, Sandra
 Ramal, Khalil
 Ramsay, David
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sandals, Liz
 Smith, Monique
 Van Bommel, Maria
 Wilkinson, John
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 21; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

GROWTH PLANNING

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe North has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Minister of Infrastructure. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I filed this late show because I was very offended with the answer given by the Minister of Infrastructure on my question last Thursday, starting out by saying something to the effect of, what alarm clock did I turn on to wake up to this problem?

I can tell you right now, I've been member of county council, I've been a citizen of Simcoe county, and I'm very, very concerned about the future of Simcoe county and the 20-year plan. In fact, I've voiced opposition a number of times to the IGAP plan and now the Simcoe growth plan. Even at the Barrie-Innisfil annexation hearings, I made sure that as many mayors as I possibly could got out to those hearings. I wanted them to voice their concerns with the growth plan at that time, and that goes back to last year.

However, what I wanted to point out clearly about the amendment is that the minister made the amendment three days after the municipal election. We all know that we're going to have lame-duck municipal councils until at least mid-December, after they're all sworn in and they

can attend their first meeting. We have the Christmas season; we have budgets; we have orientations, and the minister thinks he's done a big deal by giving the municipalities until January 31, 2011, to comment on the amendment.

Just today—I want to make sure I get this on the record—I've talked to a number of the mayors and deputy mayors and council members in Simcoe county: Mike Burkett, the mayor-elect of the township of Severn; Gerry Marshall, the mayor-elect of the town of Penetang; Gordon McKay, the mayor-elect of the town of Midland; Angelo Orsi, the mayor-elect of the city of Orillia—the list goes on and on of municipal council members who are concerned about this deadline. I asked them for an extension of six months so that these councillors could have an orientation. This is a 20-year plan. It will have an impact for the next 20 years, and I think it's safe to say that they're very much onside.

I can tell you what they said today. This is a letter that was just put out to Minister Chiarelli and Minister Bartolucci:

"We cannot stress enough, that the county wants to continue to work with the province on solutions and we do not wish to be adversarial. We do feel, however, that we have been disregarded completely—words such as 'disrespect' and 'total disconnect' (of communications and roles between various provincial ministries and initiatives) were stated by members of council" today—and that's the last meeting of this county council.

"We are concerned about good planning and growth opportunities being stifled. We are concerned about this region's provincially significant opportunities and infrastructure being lost—due to what has been described by some as nothing more than provincial short-sightedness, bureaucratic influences and a push for policy over reality. Hopefully we will work together to prove them wrong."

That comes from the county of Simcoe, out of their meeting today, in a letter to the minister.

On top of that, here's a letter from the township of Oro-Medonte from yesterday. "There are a number of factors that have implications on the current deadline for submissions; the new council for Oro-Medonte will not be sworn in until December 1, 2010, and will then require an appropriate transition period in order to be provided the opportunity to be fully engaged with the implications associated with the proposed amendment."

What I'm saying is, it doesn't necessarily have to be July 31—but at least more time than we're giving. It's completely unreasonable and irresponsible for this government to think that they can put an amendment through and have all the deadlines for consultations done by January 31.

From the floor of county council there were many questions today, but what's more of a concern is, I'm getting the same kind of comments from the development industry, from builders etc., who are wondering what is actually going on with this thing. On top of that, this is the only municipality in the Places to Grow legislation

that has been micromanaged by this ministry—completely irresponsible. They have not been given a fair opportunity.

I can tell you the list will go on and on. I understand there are more and more resolutions coming in over the next couple of days. The minister may want to ignore it, and that's his responsibility, but he shouldn't be taking personal shots at me, which I think was very bad on his part when he made the comments in response to my question last week. He should be caring about the citizens of the county of Simcoe, who have to live with this plan for the next 20 years. This is one of the most beautiful counties in the province. You know how hard I've worked yourself, Madam Chair, on the Lake Simcoe Protection Act; bringing it to the floor of this Legislature, so we could have a meaningful debate on a resolution. I care immensely about what happens, and I care immensely about what happens to the planning in the county of Simcoe.

What I'm going to say in conclusion is, if this government doesn't want to extend that deadline, we'll have to put it through. But I'm going to tell you one thing: When we, the PC government, are elected in this House next October, we will fix their mistakes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's a pleasure to rise in the House to respond.

The vibrant communities of Barrie, Orillia and Simcoe county will continue to grow. This growth must be sustainable so that Simcoe county remains healthy and prosperous. That's why on October 28, we released and began consulting on a draft amendment to the growth plan. Our amendment aims to maintain the vitality of the Simcoe area by creating vibrant and complete communities by protecting the environment and by supporting job creation.

1810

The draft amendment would provide more specific direction to guide growth in the Simcoe area, helping address the region's complex growth challenge, for example, by identifying six urban areas or nodes where major growth can be focused, making for more efficient use of infrastructure and limiting urban sprawl; and also by identifying industrial employment areas along Highway 400 and other economic employment districts to support significant local job creation, particularly in manufacturing and industrial activities.

In his question last week, the member claimed that we are not providing enough time for consultation. As Minister Chiarelli stated in response, we held extensive consultations over a two-year period before releasing the proposed amendment. Now we're holding another 90-day consultation on the amendment itself. We're only three weeks into the consultation period, but we've already tracked over 1,200 visits to the proposed amendment Web page, and formal submissions have already begun to flow in. We are also hosting a series of technical briefings in the Simcoe area. More than 85 stakeholders and

residents attended the three sessions we've held so far, and two more are scheduled.

The member would have us extend the consultation period through July, yet Simcoe county residents and municipalities have made it very clear that they want us to move forward to bring this process to its completion and provide certainty to the community.

But let's let municipal representatives speak for themselves. And I might want to mention that a quote was raised about the fact that there have recently been municipal elections. There were only seven new councillors elected in the whole county, so the vast majority of the councillors know exactly what's going on on this.

Michael MacEachern, mayor of New Tecumseth, was quoted in the Simcoe Metroland paper on November 4, 2010: "I am very encouraged by the government's release of the proposed amendment. Acting now will ensure that we grow in a sustainable manner that protects our valuable resources and preserves the quality of life we enjoy in Simcoe county."

On October 28, 2010, Barb Baguley, mayor-elect of Innisfil, told the Toronto Star: "It improves so much of society when people can work locally."

Jeff Lehman, Barrie ward 2 councillor and future mayor of the city of Barrie, said in the Orillia Packet and Times on November 1, 2010: "This is good news as the amendment is consistent with our vision for slower and smarter growth, expanding the number of jobs in Barrie and creating the certainty needed to allow us to proceed for planning new employment areas."

A quote from Cal Patterson, warden of Simcoe county—he was quoted in the Midland Mirror on November 1, 2010: "We are pleased to see that many of the county's comments on the vision paper have been incorporated in the province's proposed amendment."

We'll take our cues from these municipal leaders rather than from the honourable member. He's had his chance to make submissions to this, and before last week, when he asked the question on our Simcoe growth strategy, he had not raised the issue once.

I have met with a number of the councillors personally, including Cal Patterson, warden of Simcoe county. Over the past time, they approached me and asked if there was anything they could do to help out on this. We've had a number of meetings. I was very pleased to have tried to assist this group from Simcoe county, and I look forward to meeting with them again as this process rolls forward.

I thank you for your time.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nickel Belt has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The member

has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Hier, j'ai demandé une question à la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée qui me tenait particulièrement à cœur. Malheureusement, à cause de problèmes techniques de traduction, elle n'a pas compris ma question. Je dois dire qu'elle est venue s'en excuser à la première occasion qu'elle a eue, mais tout de même, c'est une question qui demande une réponse.

La question vient d'une longue histoire. Je vais essayer de la faire très courte étant donné le temps que j'ai.

Dans un premier temps, on commence avec la communauté francophone de Peel et Halton. Ces gens-là, depuis la mise en place de la Loi sur les services en français, travaillent à mettre en place un centre de santé communautaire francophone. Ils se sont organisés en corporation, et en 1992, au travers de ce qui était dans le temps le conseil régional de santé, ils ont présenté une demande de financement en bonne et due forme pour un centre de santé communautaire francophone pour desservir la population.

La demande a été refusée. Ils l'ont retravaillée et l'ont resoumise quatre fois. Ils l'ont soumise en 1992, en 1997, en 1998 et en 2001. Ils l'ont également modifiée pour voir si, plutôt que d'avoir un centre de santé communautaire francophone autonome, il pourrait devenir un satellite de ce qu'on appelle maintenant le Centre francophone de Toronto. Cela aussi a été rejeté.

En 2005, ils changent leur fusil d'épaule et font des demandes de financement pour une équipe de santé familiale. Même réponse : on leur répond non. La demande va être refaite, et c'est là que l'histoire s'embrouille encore plus.

Quand la position du commissaire aux services en français a finalement été mise en place, ils ont fait une plainte en bonne et due forme. La plainte a été reçue par le commissaire, elle a été étudiée, et des recommandations claires en sont ressorties. Dans le rapport du commissaire, on peut voir les recommandations qui ont été faites, et je dois dire que certaines—il y a eu de l'action. Entre autres, le commissaire a recommandé qu'on revoie les critères du processus d'évaluation d'une demande d'équipe de soins familiaux, et cela a été fait. Mais la recommandation la plus importante, là où notre commissaire donne une directive claire avec une date butoir, ça, en vérifiant sur le terrain avec les gens qui travaillent encore à mettre sur pied un centre de santé communautaire, un satellite ou une équipe de soins familiaux—il n'y a toujours rien qui a été fait.

J'aimerais vous lire un extrait de ce que le commissaire aux services en français a écrit. « Le commissaire recommande que le ministère reconnaisse sans équivoque sa responsabilité ultime, que présentement ces services ne sont pas offerts et que la responsabilité de trouver des solutions à cette situation n'incombe pas uniquement à la communauté. » Ce sont quand même des mots clairs et des mots assez fermes.

Recommandation numéro 3—et ça, c'était ma question : « Le commissaire recommande que le

ministère, en collaboration avec les deux RLISS, développe et propose à la communauté francophone de Peel et Halton des modèles pratiques et concrets de prestations de services de santé en français et que ces derniers puissent être mis en place avant la fin de l'année 2010. »

Ma question à la ministre était toute simple. Vous avez une directive du commissaire aux services en français qui vous dit de proposer à la communauté francophone de Peel et Halton des modèles pratiques, et vous devez le faire avant la fin de l'année 2010. Nous sommes présentement le 23 novembre. Je suis forte en maths; ça veut dire qu'il reste 38 jours. Hier, quand j'ai posé ma question, il en restait 39. J'ai donc demandé à la ministre : « Il vous reste 39 jours, madame la Ministre. Quand est-ce qu'on va finalement voir que vous respectez une directive du commissaire aux services en français de donner à la communauté francophone—de proposer des modèles pratiques et concrets? »

Non seulement que c'est important pour les gens de Peel et Halton, mais ce n'est pas souvent que notre commissaire émet une directive aussi claire avec une date butoir. Ça ne fait pas longtemps qu'on l'a, notre commissaire. On est bien content qu'il soit là. Mais si, à la première occasion, il donne une directive claire et la ministre l'ignore complètement, bien, on piétine; on aura fait tout ça pour rien. Merci.

M. Phil McNeely: Je suis heureux de répondre de façon plus détaillée à la question posée hier par ma collègue la députée France Gélinas concernant un rapport du Commissariat aux services en français au sujet des services en français dans la région de Peel et de Halton. Je tiens à assurer cette Chambre que notre gouvernement est fermement déterminé à assurer un accès à des services de santé en français pour les francophones. Nous avons adopté des mesures concrètes pour réaliser cet engagement.

Nous prenons les recommandations du commissaire aux services en français très au sérieux et nous travaillons à l'amélioration des services dans Peel-Halton. Notre gouvernement a accordé 320 000 \$ au Centre de services de santé Peel et Halton pour la mise au point de modèles de prestation de services de soins primaires culturellement appropriés. Ce projet, qui s'échelonne sur deux ans, prendra fin le printemps prochain. Le ministère examinera et évaluera ensuite les résultats et le potentiel de services.

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Le ministère travaille aussi activement à l'élaboration d'options visant à offrir des soins primaires dans la région de Peel-Halton qui répondent aux besoins d'une population francophone urbaine.

À l'occasion du récent appel de propositions de la cinquième vague portant sur la mise sur pied de 30 nouvelles équipes de santé familiale, le ministère a modifié les critères de sélection afin d'inclure la prestation de services en français. Je suis fier de dire que, sur les 30 nouvelles équipes de santé familiale qui ont été annoncées, 17, soit plus de la moitié, appuient l'engage-

ment de notre gouvernement à fournir des services en français.

Nous avons adopté une loi qui reflète encore davantage notre engagement en matière de services de santé en français. La Loi de 2006 sur l'intégration du système de santé local comprend une disposition qui respecte les besoins de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario en établissant le Conseil consultatif des services de santé en français, qui est chargé de conseiller la ministre sur les services en français. Cette année, nous avons travaillé très étroitement avec notre conseil afin d'établir et d'améliorer les services en français.

La loi prévoit également la création d'entités locales de planification afin d'assurer la participation directe de la communauté francophone.

Notre gouvernement donne suite à son engagement de mettre sur pied des entités de planification des services de santé en français. En juillet, nous avons annoncé la création de deux entités, l'une desservant les RLISS du Sud-Ouest et de Champlain, et l'autre desservant le Nord.

Le Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario a été désigné en juin comme l'entité de planification des services de santé en français des réseaux locaux d'intégration des services de santé (RLISS) de Champlain et du Sud-Ouest, et le Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario comme l'entité de planification des services de santé en français des RLISS du Nord-Est et du Nord-Ouest.

Les RLISS et les entités établiront une entente de responsabilisation qui régira leurs relations de travail. L'entente servira de base à la négociation d'ententes locales qui énonceront les modalités de financement et de reddition de comptes.

Une fois que toutes les nouvelles entités de planification des services de santé en français auront été mises sur pied, elles joueront un rôle crucial en travaillant avec les RLISS pour améliorer les services dans les collectivités locales.

Tous les RLISS pourront compter sur un coordonnateur des services en français, une fois que la mise en oeuvre de l'initiative sera terminée, en décembre 2010. Ces personnes appuieront le RLISS en matière de services en français.

De plus, notre gouvernement continue d'appuyer une variété d'initiatives touchant les services en français, comme les services de traduction et les nouvelles initiatives de recherche liées à la prestation des services de santé en français.

Je suis ravi de signaler que des progrès importants ont été réalisés à cet égard, notamment:

—la désignation de deux entités de planification des services de santé en français et la poursuite du travail afin de désigner les quatre autres, comme je l'ai indiqué précédemment;

—l'établissement d'un groupe de travail sur la gouvernance, composé des entités de planification des services de santé en français et des RLISS, qui est chargé d'approuver le modèle d'entente de responsabilisation qui encadrera les relations de travail entre les nouvelles

entités de planification des services de santé en français et les RLISS;

—la négociation avec l'Association des centres d'accès aux soins communautaires de l'Ontario visant la création d'une composante de langue française à son service « d'aiguillage » et d'information;

—la mise au point d'initiatives de recherche du ministère afin d'appuyer le travail lié aux politiques et aux programmes; et

—le renforcement de la capacité des organismes gouvernementaux en matière de services en français.

Je suis fier de l'engagement de notre gouvernement envers la population francophone de l'Ontario et de nos mesures concrètes visant à réaliser cet engagement.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

CELLPHONES

TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This morning I had the pleasure to have a conversation with a very interesting person: Dr. Devra Davis. She is a world-renowned, award-winning scientist and author, and an expert on the health risks of cellphone radiation. She was in Ontario. She offered to meet with me, which I did. She is full of very interesting statistics and knowledge, basically. She had extended the same invitation to the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, but the minister declined. When I asked her why she declined, why she is not open to looking at the ever-growing body of scientific evidence that clearly makes the link between the use of cellphones and the development of cancer, she basically brushed it off and then she went a step further. She quoted somebody I have tremendous respect for, our chief medical officer of health, Dr. King. She quoted from a letter that Dr. King has written to me, as well as all Ontarians. Let me read the quote. I'm quoting from Hansard.

"Hon. Margaret Best: It's a pleasure for me to rise.... I want to, again, refer this member to the chief medical officer of health, our expert, 'I want to assure Ontarians that there is no established causal link between the use of wireless communication systems'"—and then the Minister of Health Promotion adds—"including cellphones, and adverse effects on human health."

The quote is incorrect. The quote from our chief medical officer of health does not say anything about cellphones; it talks about Wi-Fi, and I agree. The chief medical officer of health brought forward her report. I think the date was September 16. The report is extensive. It always brings forward the same high-quality investigation that Dr. King brings to this legislation and shows

clearly that there is no link between Wi-Fi and ill effects, but Dr. King does not say anything about cellphones. Only the minister added that into the quote, which does not exist. The quote is wrong.

So, to me, it's really weird that, first of all, our Minister of Health Promotion is ignoring the findings of her own agency, because the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion says—and I will quote from that, and anybody can go on the website and see—“There is emerging evidence that long-term frequent use of cellphones may be associated with an increased risk of tumours on the side of the head where the cellphone is used.” This is on page 7 of their report.

This report is on the website of the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, yet the minister continues to say that there is no evidence that there is a risk to health from cellphones. She doesn't listen to her own agency. She doesn't listen to what the public health unit in Toronto has to say. More and more jurisdictions are starting to act upon this to try to protect people.

My bill is very simple: Put out a warning. The cellphone company already tells you that there's a health risk. If you have the same BlackBerry I do, go on page 42 of the manual, which is printed so small that you can't read it, but if you're ever able to read it, on page 42 and it goes on to page 43, you will see that they do tell you that there is a health risk and that you should keep this device at least an inch away from your body. It's the same thing if you use an iPhone. We have checked, and all of the manuals have them. All I'm asking is, take that information that is buried in a document that nobody uses and put it on cellphones so that people can use it to protect themselves.

But it gets even weirder because in her response she says that parents have a role to play to protect their children from cellphones, but then she says there's no risk with cellphones. You can't have it both ways, and you can't quote our chief medical officer of health as saying something that she never said. That's why I'm dissatisfied.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: En tant qu'adjoint parlementaire au ministère de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport, il me fait plaisir de répondre à la députée, une députée pour qui j'ai beaucoup de respect pour son travail et surtout pour le rôle qu'elle joue dans l'organisation de l'APF.

I want to again reiterate that this government takes the health of all Ontarians very seriously, in particular, the health of Ontario's children.

Je veux souligner que ce gouvernement prend la santé des Ontariens et des Ontariennes très sérieusement, et en particulier la santé de nos enfants.

Cellphone signals, or more specifically, the concerns over the safety of being exposed to radio frequency radiation emitted from cellphones, have been addressed in this House before and in specific studies the ministry

uses to assess public concerns. I want the member to understand that this ministry takes advice from doctors and scientists on significant matters such as this.

Je veux que la députée comprenne que le ministère prend en considération des avis médicaux.

“To date, no adverse health effects have been established for mobile phone use.” The WHO goes on to say, “To date, research does not suggest any consistent evidence of adverse health effects from exposure to radio frequency fields at levels below those that cause tissue heating. Further, research has not been able to provide support for a ... relationship between exposure to electromagnetic fields and self-reported symptoms, or ‘electromagnetic hypersensitivity.’”

The member opposite has even tried to use a recent report from the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion on mobile phone use in an attempt to push her own agenda forward. In doing so, the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion had to send out a media release saying that the member for Nickel Belt misrepresented the conclusion of the report she cited as her rationale. In the OAHPP media release, Dr. Vivek Goel, the organization's CEO, said, “The bottom line is there is no evidence to provide a basis for recommending changes to policy regarding cellphones.”

Finally, as I said at the outset, we take our advice from doctors and scientists. More importantly, we trust the knowledge of our own experts such as the chief medical officer of health for the province of Ontario. As per a quote from Dr. King, the chief medical officer of health of Ontario: “I want to assure Ontarians that there is no established ... link between the use of wireless communication systems, including cellphones and adverse effects on human health.”

The Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion also recently completed a review of published scientific studies and reports produced by credible national and international public health agencies on a similar RF-based technology, and this review noted that evidence to support a causal relationship between cellphone use and tumours is lacking.

Health Canada and other national and international organizations have developed standards and guidelines to protect the public from adverse effects of radio frequency energy. Along with other public health experts in Ontario, they continue to monitor any new information on radio frequency energy relevant to the protection of public health and be sure that this is brought to the attention of the appropriate standards-setting organizations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This concludes the late shows. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1834.

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 24 November 2010

Mercredi 24 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2010, on the amendment to the motion relating to negotiations with the federal government on a comprehensive new agreement to provide funding, planning, and governance for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be here this morning.

I seek unanimous consent to wear the daffodil, which is with respect to the Canadian Cancer Society, to work today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: I was going to say it's lonely at the top here on this side, and leave it at that. There's a lot of work to be done.

I've been waiting anxiously to speak to this particular motion by Minister Hoskins on the government side. I've been disappointed two or three times because it keeps getting pulled off the order paper and replaced by some less important issue, like tax cuts for electricity and things like that.

When our caucus reviewed this motion—under the five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, COIA, \$207 million in funding was not applied for and therefore not allocated as part of the negotiations in a new motion. Our leader, Tim Hudak, amended the motion to force the provincial government to provide a “fully-costed plan including accountability and performance measures” for the \$207 million.

That can easily be explained. When I look over the last while, they throw million-dollar bills around like we would throw feathers. They spend a million dollars a day on consultants. So I think it's only appropriate at this time in Ontario's history, when we're falling off the cliff in debt—they've doubled the debt. Yesterday, the government forced a bill through here that would spend another billion dollars a year on a program that was to fix some-

thing they had broken, which was the electricity problem. We simply feel that it's fine and noteworthy that the McGuinty government keeps promising, promising, promising, but all of that eventually has to be paid for.

All of us here want a good environment, a good health care system and safe, clean, affordable electricity; all of us want that. How we go about doing it is the issue. This is one more example that simply—respectfully, Mr. Speaker, we don't think that this government is on the right track.

It reminds me, quite honestly, of the past several years that we've been here. Every once in a while, there's a little flare-up on the eHealth scandal, the consultants scandal. On the scandal that I'm drawn to, which deals with this immigration issue, the Auditor General, Jim McCarter, slammed spending controls on the grants as among the worst that we've ever seen. In fact, it ended up with Mike Colle's resignation as the minister after giving out a million dollars to the cricket club, and some others unaccounted for.

This is very clear: When you're going to allocate money that's all taxpayers' money—I don't care what level it's from—let's start to build in the controls of accountability. This isn't intimidating or critical, really. What it's saying is, “Let's slow it down here.” Don't make so many promises that you can't fund and that you probably have no intention of keeping. I become very saddened when I look around, because most members on all sides here want to do the right thing, and that's the time in Ontario that we can all make the turn together. We're all for it.

In fact, I've got the privilege of moving an amendment by our leader, Tim Hudak, and the motion should be amended. Now, I should clearly put the motion on the record. Here's the motion. It says, “That the Legislative”—this is the current one, what we're debating this morning, in case some of those at home aren't paying attention, because this goes on and off—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would remind the member that we're debating an amendment now.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. That's good. The amendment is that—I want to get the motion on there so I know what we're—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It is an amendment that we're debating right now. You're proposing another amendment?

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, no. This one is already on the record. Thank you for that clarification. I think that's

a worthy interjection. Well, the Speaker has the right to stand at any time, so I respect that, and I respect the current Speaker as well.

The motion, originally, was: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two-thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension"—no, that's not the one, either. Okay, I've got the wrong one.

I'm going to stick to it here. It says: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding \$207 million promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately commence negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper."

Mr. Hudak's amendment here is, "That the motion be amended by removing the words 'and the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding' and 'promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately'

"And substituting the words:

"[A]nd calls on the provincial government to"—this is what's really important; it's subtle but important.

We've talked about this in our caucus, and we certainly have full, full agreement. I would hope that the government side will see the simplicity of this. The simplicity and sincerity of it all is like this: "[A]nd calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed"—there it is—"plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the"—and that's the end of that. That's implied.

What it really does—we agree. This thing should be a no-brainer. Adopt our amendment. All it does is provide the accountability mechanisms and the costing. What could anyone possibly find unacceptable about that?

This becomes the real test. If this doesn't, then is that to say that there shouldn't be accountability for all of the money, \$200 million? I'm looking at the young pages here. We're tossing million-dollar bills around here like they're feathers.

Hey, I think some of these programs are absolutely critical—do you understand?—to allow people who come to this province and this great country to assimilate, accommodate or be accommodated. I really think it's important. There's second-language training for them to

become part of this great province. I mean this great province under the many Premiers that we've had for the last 100-plus years. It isn't political.

This is about building a country with open, accessible, accountable rules that we all respect. I can almost ask now for unanimous consent, and I think I'd get it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Go for it.

0910

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm feeling such a good spirit this morning—I'm feeling it. I'm starting to feel the spirit is alive here—honestly. That's a good way to start the day.

I spent this morning at breakfast with the cancer society, and I actually met one of my own constituents, Kendra Chopcian—I've met her a couple of times; she's very, very committed—and her biggest issue is trying to accommodate persons and families suffering with cancer. She said to me that the most important of their top five priorities, besides indoor tanning and smoking cessation and all that, is access to drugs.

Quite honestly, Minister Deb Matthews was very respectful; she thanked the volunteers for being here for MPP education day. But I was so impressed: Our health critic is not as new and experienced on the job, but you could just sense her compassion in her remarks. The member for Whitby-Oshawa—Christine Elliott, if we're allowed to say that—was very good. It does tie to this, because it's accommodation of people and settlement grants and other things.

Our key concerns here are: Yes, we agree; yes, the agreement should be for the \$207 million; it should be a fully drawn up program with accountability mechanisms. That's what our leader is saying here. The money is there. It has been allocated, in the budget sense. It needs to be spent appropriately.

We do not need another cricket club or another boondoggle. We don't need the Auditor General to come in here and say, "You've squandered another \$1 million." That's not what we want. We need settlement programs that both respond to the needs of newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario. That's important. Just rethink that again. This says, "... respond to the needs of newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario." That's pretty straightforward. I can't find any implied edginess to that.

The second point: In 2007, citizenship and immigration minister Mike Colle was forced to resign during the slushgate scandal. We don't want any more of that; that's for sure. I don't say that—that's been dealt with; the minister had to be removed from cabinet, and it's too bad. He's a nice fellow, but there you have it.

Number three: Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak proposed an amendment to the motion that would help create programs for newcomers and provide accountability measures so that scandals like slushgate don't happen again. All of us would agree with that—all of us. I think we've learned our lesson. I know it's unacceptable on our side; I retain the right to be suspicious about the other side.

Newcomers to Ontario believe in a level playing field. They believe they will get a fair shake based on their

skills, not their connections to a particular government. That should be completely expunged from any access to government programming at any level for any reason. That being connected has its privileges is simply wrong. We need a level playing field. We need everyone to come here with the right opportunities: the right programs in the right place at the right time for people who are trying to become strong contributors.

Our recommendation speaks only to the amendment and not the motion, and accepts the motion as amended. That's the whole deal. We're just asking you to do something in common practice here today: Accept our amendment, and then we accept the motion.

We put it in such a way that it really does not alter the \$207 million or the direction of the program spending. What is does is build in accountability, and that program deliverers and program recipients comply. I think that all of us would agree with that. Again, I'm feeling very optimistic.

I think about my own riding of Durham. I have quite a nice mix of people who have chosen to live in Bowmanville or wherever. I think of the Greek families in my riding. I go to their restaurants: Massey House in Newcastle as well as Zante in Bowmanville—very excellently prepared food, family-oriented. When they came here, they had a pizza place called the Three Brothers—there were three brothers. They came to our community and made our community a better place. I'm also very familiar with Derek, another new Canadian who settled in the culinary arts field. His restaurant is Chanterelle. This fellow is a marvellous cook. I think he was trained in Toronto, but he and his family work hard and have a wonderful restaurant, which is now under construction.

In fact, that's why I bring—Mr. Speaker, you probably do as well. Next to my riding office, which is on King Street in Bowmanville—my riding is quite large; it's about an hour to get to the other side, and yours is probably the same. Next to me there is a St. Vincent de Paul, and we are often accommodated with them. St. Vincent de Paul is—people of faith work there; it's mostly staffed by volunteers. They accommodate new Canadians, new Ontarians and new citizens in my riding of Durham with clothing and furniture and stuff like that. I commend those people who work through the churches. In fact, just this past summer we moved and a lot of our stuff went to those places so that it could be picked up. That's the kind of accountability that this bill and this program does.

Now, here's the deal. It would be nice to be able to assign some of that \$207 million as part of the accommodations of new Canadians, along with those volunteer groups that might provide language training or help them do the job search thing and skills training and help them through what I'd say is the labyrinth or the maze of all these red tape things that become barriers for people to get on with their lives with their children and perhaps other members of their family. It's very easy for us to think about it in our ridings in terms of real, practical things that would help them and make it easier for them to become productive residents, and hopefully citizens, of

this great province and this great country. But that's just a couple. There are more that I could take my time for.

If I move down the little shopping strip on the main street, King Street, where I am, right next to it is a 7-Eleven or a convenience store. This is another success story. There's a young family there; I think they came from Vietnam. I speak to Paul all the time; this fellow works like no one I've ever met. I always tease him. I say, "You and I are the only two guys who work 365 days a year." That's what I tell him. The only time he gets a day off is Christmas.

Now, here's the irony. My wife just retired from teaching. Their son, who was born—I saw him in the convenience store with the mother and the father, running the store. I've been doing this for 16 years; you've been here longer, so you see these stories. This young boy is now in grade 12. This young boy, who basically grew up in the convenience store, is the top student in school. This is a story about accommodation, but they didn't really ask for much. I believe they give more than they take.

Quite frankly, I'm convinced, when I think of Paul in the convenience store next to my riding office—I've learned a few Vietnamese words, but I can't use them here because people would criticize my pronunciation. He is bilingual now, his child is bilingual, and the two of them still work. They do not have any help except their own family. It's either Paul or his wife in the store. They have their grandmother the odd time; she comes over and helps a bit.

I've heard—I can't confirm this—that they actually own the building now, after 16, maybe 20, years; these people are so focused on sustainability and their own sense of responsibility. This ties in to this small amount of money spread among the right people at the right price in the right programs to accommodate them to come and live in Ontario, and in fact in Durham region. It's remarkable.

0920

All this amendment from our leader Tim Hudak does—it's quite a practical, non-intrusive, non-combative kind of suggestion—is build in a mechanism of accountability. That's all it does. We agree 100% with the request, with the condition that the \$207 million is handled appropriately.

Let the viewers and listeners here today think for themselves. This is not meant to be in any way edgy, belligerent, any of those things. This is about having the right rules for this amount of money in this time in our society, when Ontario is falling off the cliff in debt, so that these people actually get the \$207 million—not some consultant, with all due respect; not some red-tape bureaucrat.

I see the minister on the other side there, Mr. Murray, the Minister of Research and Innovation, with his \$30-million program, a huge program, to accommodate Ph.D. students. Even there, I agree, quite frankly, that we need to attract the brightest and the best, but we also have to accommodate those people who choose Canada for a lot of other reasons. We don't need just elites all the time.

What we need is to help the people who are here today. I'd put that down as priority number one, and I believe our leader, Tim Hudak, is saying the same thing.

This is \$207 million. This is to accommodate people, through all the legitimate means, who are coming here. We need to find ways to accommodate them. All we're asking for is to build in the one little condition. Some will criticize it. The amendment is entirely based on control—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I believe it's questions and comments, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, this is a resolution, so there are no questions or comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Fair enough. I'll get right to the meat of the matter.

It's always a pleasure to follow the member for Durham, no matter what he's speaking about, because he's entertaining, doesn't read his notes and makes some extremely valuable points.

Let's be frank: This is a government, the McGuinty government, that is failing in the eyes of the electorate. Seventy-six per cent of Ontarians say they want somebody else to govern this province.

One of the files they're failing on is the newcomer/recent immigrant file. I'm privileged and honoured to be the representative of Parkdale-High Park, where many of the recent immigrants and newcomers come when they immigrate to Toronto or Ontario. It's one of the first places they come. In fact, Jameson Avenue, where all the high-rises are, is called the landing strip with some endearment, because a huge share of the refugees of the world comes to the south end of Parkdale when they first land in Canada.

I can tell you that I've been out speaking to them in various functions, and I hear a recurrent theme. It's a recurrent theme whether they be Tibetan—we have about 5,000 Tibetans in south Parkdale—whether they be Roma, and we have about 3,000 Roma; whether they be Tamil; whether they be Hispanic, from a number of Hispanic nations etc. The recurrent theme is this: "We came expecting that our international designations, our work experience in our home countries and our schooling experience in our home countries would count for something."

They're not unrealistic. They also realize, as generations of immigrants before them realized, that we are all immigrants in this place. Only First Nations people do not come from immigrant stock. We all know from our grandparents, our great-grandparents, our parents—whoever was the first-wave generation that brought our family to this country—that the first generation expects to do less than their expectations for at least a given period of time.

But we've moved way beyond that now. We've moved way beyond that. When I hear from an Iranian surgeon in his 40s that it's going to take him at least 10 years to get accredited even as a GP in this province, and he has to travel back to Iran for six months of the year,

and work as a baker here for now \$10.25 an hour to be able to sustain his family when a million Ontarians don't have a family doctor, you know there's a problem.

When we see Tibetans who have postgraduate degrees come here whose only chance of making a living that will get them out of an apartment and into a home is to open their own business—and that's a precarious venture in a recession—because they can't get jobs in their professions without putting in eight to 10 years, which is the average that I hear, in my riding, to be accredited in anything like their chosen profession, we have a problem. When, for the first time in Canada and in Ontario, we're looking at a situation where our children are going to be worse off than their parents, this is a shock. This is a shock because immigrants come here expecting that their children and grandchildren will be better off than they were when they came, and now we are looking at a generation that will be worse off.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, not the whole generation.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: And we don't have to look very far. I know that I'm getting some—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Minister of Consumer Services is heckling me on this. But let me point out to the Minister of Consumer Services, who doesn't want to wait for his turn to have his say in this place but would prefer to shout down, yet again, a woman—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, come on. It's not—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let's say to the Minister of Consumer—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay, everybody's going to sit down and relax now. We're going to have a nice debate.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Don't you shout down a man.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm not going to go there.

Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As I was going to say, in my parents' generation, and I'm a boomer kid, it was not uncommon for the second generation—that is, children of immigrants—to own their own home, to have a car in the driveway and to do it on one salary. Those who were very lucky would have cottages or camps as well. In my generation that's less common and for my children's generation, good luck, if you live in the city of Toronto, if even two people working full-time can afford a house and a car in the driveway. They can only do it in debt up to their ears. God bless their children, who will be saddled with the highest university debt in Canada. We're 10th out of 10 in per capita funding for university for our students. So you're saddled with huge debt just to get a BA, and what does a BA grant you now? Virtually nothing, unless you go on to a professional degree. That is the economic reality into which immigrants come in this province.

Yes, we will support the amendment. Yes, we'll support the meat of the matter. But very clearly, what the PC Party is speaking about here, and what the member from Durham himself spoke to, is that this government, when failing on a file, invariably points an accusatory finger at the federal government. Because what do you do if you're failing yet again, when you're in free fall in the polls? You try to point the blame somewhere else, and really, that's what this original motion does. The PC correlative to that motion, the amendment to that motion, simply brings accountability back to where it belongs, certainly in parts, and that is with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the minister himself, and asking, what is the provincial government going to do about this? What is the McGuinty government going to do about this problem?

There are a number of recommendations that have been made from a number of stakeholder groups to this government that they could act on immediately. I spoke to an ESL class. There were about 40 students crammed into a space designed for about 20, and they barely were holding on to that space. I spoke to them and they talked about the lack of English-as-a-second-language classes, how difficult it is to get into them, how difficult it is to get out of them and into well-paying jobs. I know that the fairness commission has pointed out, in their study of 2010, some of the problems faced by new immigrants that this provincial government could do something about. Certainly, internationally trained applicants need to be better informed prior to arriving in Canada; that's unquestionable. But once they get here, the requirements of some of the regulatory bodies for Canadian work experience and for increased course requirements are incredibly difficult, in fact often insurmountable. This government could do something about that.

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This government could take steps that are absolutely necessary to make unionization more possible. Right now, this government has made it impossible, made it outside of the law, for at-home caregivers to organize. We remind those who are watching that the number of at-home caregivers has tripled in the last number of years, many of them women, many of them from the Philippines. They're not allowed to organize; they're not allowed to unionize.

What about the scandals that have plagued our migrant farm workers? We heard a question in the House just yesterday from our leader, Andrea Horwath, about that. A scandal—just now, on the CBC this morning, I heard about Trinidadian workers who weren't even paid by their farmers, who are going to be flown back to their home countries, to poverty yet again, and they're not even going to be paid at all for the work they've done. Farm workers are not allowed to unionize. Clearly, if there was ever a group that needs the protection of organized labour, it's them.

We witnessed the deaths of Jamaican farm workers—again, a serious problem, a serious lack. The Minister of Labour deflects this. We need action on that file.

We need in this province card-check certification and anti-scab legislation. That would help those who feel they don't have a voice to have a voice.

We know that with unionization come benefits, better living standards—comes, in fact, a middle class, which is what we're losing in the province of Ontario. We're losing those good, above-\$30-, above-\$40-an-hour jobs, those good manufacturing jobs that helped pay our recent immigrants—who couldn't speak English very well, many of them—a living salary, a salary they could buy a house with, put a car in the driveway with, pay for their children's university education with. Where are those jobs? Certainly, the ESL class I spoke to the other week weren't looking at jobs paying anything near that. They were looking at house-cleaning, part-time, fast food, labour. These jobs will never pay them enough to have a house, to have a car, to have that middle-class lifestyle we promised immigrants from the time of Confederation. It certainly won't allow them to pay for their children's university education. If those are the only jobs open to them, then we're looking at generations of poverty, and poverty that has a colour to it.

I want to quote just a few stats from the Colour of Poverty report, which speaks directly to the immigrant problem. Between 1981 and 2001, the number of immigrants who are poor in Toronto—largely people of colour—grew by 125%. Every agency that works with immigrants—and I want to give a shout-out to Culture-Link and Parkdale Intercultural Association, which was here yesterday—and many in my riding who work with immigrants all the time find they can't keep up with the demand and they don't have enough funding. They spend a lot of their time applying for funds when they should have stability of funding for what they do.

Certainly, we're looking at about 200,000 to 300,000 immigrants in Canada, and many in Ontario, who aren't legal; who are working on illegal construction sites; who are working under the table; who are, again, a problem that this Ontario government could do something about.

We still live in a province that will not extend OHIP coverage to the children and the refugees who come from other countries, who aren't yet citizens or landed immigrants, for their first three months. This is dangerous, in fact. It's a dangerous situation, where people might come without medical care and live in our communities, and, luckily, because of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in our schools, can send their children to school, but those selfsame children can't see a doctor. This provincial government could do something about that.

Certainly, where small business is concerned, we know, as you heard the member from Durham speak about, that many of our recent immigrants go into small business. It's an option for them. It's a precarious option but it's an option. Small business: When we had a small business delegation here from the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas that came representing some 30,000 businesses, this government would not meet with them to discuss their concerns over the application of the HST. Many of those store owners on our main streets are recent immigrants. They work, as you heard,

with their families, and they work hour after hour after hour. They just wanted a hearing; they didn't get it. In fact, there is no ministry for small business anymore under the McGuinty government.

These are all areas where the McGuinty government, the provincial government, could act to help recent immigrants. Instead, what they always do, it seems, when they fail on a file—and they're failing on this one; just ask anybody in my riding who has come from another country and is trying to get work—is they point their fingers at the federal government. We in the New Democratic Party say that there's enough blame to go around. There's no doubt that the federal government should do more, could do more, particularly in whatever they're telling immigrants before they begin the immigration process. Certainly they could do more, but we are not in Ottawa; we're sitting and speaking and debating at Queen's Park, the heart of the Ontario provincial government, and the Ontario provincial government has a responsibility to hold up its end of the bargain to make life easier for new immigrants and to listen to their demands. In every report that has come out, there are demands to do better.

Recently, for example, in my community, we've had an influx, as I've said, of Roma folk, who have been driven out of their home countries by a combination of economic issues and racism. They've decided to land in Toronto. We're delighted by that, because we are an inclusive place—Toronto and Ontario. We welcome those who are unwelcome anywhere else. Here's a case of a community that is unwelcome just about everywhere else, who have come here, but they're a very high-needs community. Most of them don't speak English. Many of the parents and the grandparents never had formal school training. They were sent to special schools in the countries that they emigrated from, completely because of racism. And what do they find here?

First of all, on the good side, they find incredible social service agencies that are working above and beyond the call. They're finding some phenomenal public schools, some phenomenal high schools, that are trying everything they can, working after hours, to meet the new need. But the schools and the agencies don't have what they need. They don't have enough ESL teachers. There's a huge waiting list. They don't have enough social workers to work on issues that plague new immigrants, particularly high-needs new immigrants. At the Roma festival that we were pleased to hold in Parkdale, we heard all about the failings of the provincial government, not the federal government, in meeting its educational, its health care and other requirements, which only this government can address, that directly speak to immigrant workers.

In the few minutes I have left, I just want to recap what we're calling for in the New Democratic Party. First of all, we're calling for this government to step up on the labour file where recent immigrants are concerned. We've seen Jamaican and Trinidadian farm workers be absolutely abused in their jobs. Some of them died. We are asking the Minister of Labour to extend the ability to organize, to unionize, to them. It's a simple Canadian

right. To facilitate this, we need card-check certification. To facilitate this, we need anti-scab legislation.

We're also asking that this government, through its power, speaks to the regulatory bodies so that new medical staff, new engineers, new accountants don't have to wait for 10 years to be able to get accredited in this province but can very quickly get their feet on the ground. We need them. We're desperate for them. Why aren't they working in their given fields? We ask for that as well.

And, of course, we ask for some recompense for the small business owner. Many new immigrants are small business owners, who provide, by the way, 90% of the new jobs in this province. We're asking for the government to at least listen to their demands around HST burdens and around other tax and regulatory burdens they face. This government isn't listening to them.

We ask that this government read the Fairness Commissioner's report done in 2010 and the Colour of Poverty report and address those issues, and they are myriad—from housing to social assistance to health care.

We ask this government, the Ministry of Health, to step up and provide health care for recent refugees, and we ask the Minister of Education to step up and provide the ESL and social work guidance that new immigrants and their children so desperately need.

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That is provincial, all of it; that is provincial. That is something this government doesn't have to wait on the Harper government for, doesn't have to go pleading to another level of government for. That, they should be doing now.

In conclusion, does the New Democratic Party support the amendment put forth by the official opposition? Absolutely, yes. Absolutely we think that the share of the responsibility of delivering to new immigrants should be provincial as well as federal, and that it should be accountable. Do we also support the amended motion, the original one, by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mr. Hoskins? Yes. Amended, yes, we do. Will we vote for the amendment and the original? Yes, we will. But come on. Will that make the life of even one immigrant in this province one iota better, if passed? The answer is a resounding and deafening absolutely not. Will it help? Absolutely not. Does this government have so much more it could do? Absolutely so. As the granddaughter of immigrants, as the daughters and sons of immigrants, which we all are, who came at a better time to better circumstances and to better assistance, I say we can do much better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on a very important motion. I think all members in this House will agree on how important immigration is, how important immigration has been to Canada, to the building and the development of our country, and how important immigration has been particularly for Ontario in its progress.

There is very little debate, at least in my eyes—I think there are those out there who will disagree with me, and

fairly; we live in a free country and we can take our positions. But in my eyes, there is very little debate as to how important immigrants are going to be for the future prosperity of our country, and our province in particular, how important they are going to be—and I'm speaking purely from a labour force perspective—in terms of the kind of economy we want to develop, moving forward in the 21st century.

The numbers are very interesting. Let's look at some numbers in terms of what immigration means to Canada and what immigration means to Ontario. Ontario, as we know, generates about 39% of the national GDP, produces 43% of total merchandise exports and is home for almost 50% of all employees in high-tech, financial services and other knowledge-intensive industries.

Successful immigration integration is linked to Ontario's economic and social outcomes. Here are some more numbers. Immigrants account for approximately 30% of Ontario's current labour force. In Toronto alone, nearly one in two—48% to be precise—of the labour force participants are immigrants. The aging population—and that, I think, is the key here—here in the province and across the country and the slowing pace of growth in the working age population could lead to slower economic growth.

That's a very important point I always like to make. As many members know, I myself am an immigrant. I came to this great country 21 years ago—

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you—and I am indebted not only to this country for every opportunity it has given me to grow, flourish and give back in my current position; I am also thankful to my parents, who made that very critical and important decision of emigrating to Canada when they were professionals growing in their professions and in their social circles and whatnot in the country they lived in before emigrating. But they decided to move to a freer, more just and equal country so that their children, my siblings and I, could have an equal opportunity to grow as well.

One big reason we attract immigrants to this great country of ours is because we are such a great country, because we do have the rule of law; we do provide freedom, equality and justice, which in many, many parts of the world, especially where our new immigrants come from today, is something that exists in concept only but not in reality or in practical terms. But we are lucky to have those freedoms available to us. We are lucky to have a Constitution, rule of law and a Charter of Rights and Freedoms which are extremely integral to us.

Saying that, another very important reason that we have such an open immigration policy in this country, another important reason that we welcome immigrants to Canada, to Ontario, is because we need them. It is important for our economic longevity. It is important for our economic prosperity. It is something which is a necessity for us, because we do have an aging population; we do have a situation where—and I think we've debated this in this House—we are not producing enough babies to sustain our population. So we have a significant

demographic challenge that we need to address. If we take immigration out, our demographic line is this way: It's going down. By bringing people in, what we're doing is barely keeping the line straight. That is a big reason why we need immigrants coming to Canada and to Ontario: to ensure that we can continue to grow an extremely viable economy in Canada and particularly in Ontario. Something we need essentially is to maintain the quality of life we enjoy so much.

Let me just share some more numbers quickly, before getting to the other substance of my comments in relation to this motion. Ontario is the destination of choice for immigrants to Canada. We in Canada bring in roughly 200,000 or 250,000 immigrants per year—I think it's closer to 200,000. In 2009, 106,867 immigrants coming to Canada landed in Ontario. This represents 42% of all immigrants; the total was about 250,000. So 106,000 of the 250,000 came to Ontario, chose Ontario as their home. If you look at the number since 1980—and I will be part of that number—three million immigrants have arrived in Ontario since 1980. That's very significant, which means that it is extremely important and incumbent on us to work hard to provide the necessary service when it comes to language services, when it comes to other settlement and integration services, to our newcomers so they can adjust quickly and well in our society.

It is only in our best interests—let's be selfish for a minute; there's nothing wrong with that—that those who choose Ontario as their home are integrated as soon as possible. The sooner they are integrated into our society and into our economy—they're going to start working right away. They will start their businesses, as the member earlier was talking about; they will start paying taxes. If they have an income or if they have a business, that's what they will do, and they will be contributing to our economy and meeting the labour force needs we have in our economy. These are very important elements. We need to make sure that those things are met by supporting and helping.

Let me inject a little bit of my own personal story. As I mentioned earlier, I, along with my family, came to Ontario 21 years ago, back in 1988. I was 15 years old. My parents, as you can imagine, were at their prime earning age. Both were lawyers by profession. In 21 years in Canada, they haven't practised one day as lawyers in this province and in this country. And they were at their prime earning age.

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When they were deciding to move from Pakistan to Canada, their friends thought and told them that they were being silly. I think they had kinder words than that, but they told them, "Why would you leave such a good life behind when you guys are doing so well and flourishing?" and they said, "No; we want to move somewhere where our sons and our daughter are equal. We want to move to a country where they have all opportunities available to them." So they sacrificed their own careers in order to do so when they really didn't need to do that. They could have come to this great province and been part of the economy.

Now, they found other ways to be part of the economy. They got into business, which was not their line of work. Were they successful doing so? Not really. But they still stuck, and they made sure that their children got the necessary education to prosper.

Here's the effect: I like to consider immigration as brain gain. I think we spend too much time thinking about the brain drain of Canadians leaving for the United States and how we are losing the best of our talents, and we don't think enough about the brain gain, the 252,000 people who came to Ontario in 2009. That's a brain gain to our country. What we need to do is find ways as to how best to help them, to integrate them socially and economically and to make sure that they are contributing to our economy. It's a selfish thing to say, but I think it's absolutely the right thing to do, and that's what immigrants want to do.

Most of the immigrants who come to Canada are not political refugees; most of them who come to Canada are economic refugees. They come to this country because they are seeking a better life to live. They are coming here because they want to do better than the society they left behind.

Nobody likes to leave home. Anybody who has immigrated in this room will know it is a very difficult process to go through. You're just turning your life upside down and building brand new. It's like learning how to walk again. I do remember my very first winters; it's not easy to walk on snow or ice. It is literally learning how to walk again. But it's a decision people make because they want to be part of a better society and they want to be part of a better economy, and they want to contribute.

We've got this great opportunity to get in there and to start working with these newcomers, with new immigrants, and get them integrated as quickly as possible in our economy. Instead of losing the brain gain, as was the case with my parents and many others, we have this great opportunity to capitalize on the brain gain. That is an opportunity, especially in this century where the competition is extremely tough and we have to be at our best when we are looking at the competition globally. We do not have the luxury of missing out on the talent that is coming to this province.

Therefore, we need to make the necessary investments. We need to work with the federal government to make sure that we've got the investment—call it whatever agreement; the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement—so that those services around language training, around settlement services and around bridge training and economic integration are available, no ifs and buts about it.

Look at it: One of our biggest challenges that we're constantly dealing with is the shortage of family doctors. We have this great opportunity—and again, all members in this House have spoken about this in the past, about how we can get foreign medical graduates who are choosing Ontario as their home and make it as easy and quick as possible for them to practise medicine here so that they can serve patients, who happen to be our family

members, neighbours and friends. A lot is being done in that regard, but more can be done.

Of course we want to make sure that standards are maintained. Of course we want to ensure that patient safety is paramount. Therefore, nobody is saying that any doctor who comes from another part of the world should just be given a licence to practise medicine and that's it; of course not. We need to make sure that they've gone through some basic training to align their skills to standards that are offered right here in the province of Ontario, but for that we need bridge training. We need programs which we can sort of—I like to think of it sort of as a pipeline, where we can get them from one side of the pipeline, get them trained; an assembly line is probably a better analogy—and get them out as quickly as possible on the other side so they can start performing their task. Again, dual benefit here: Not only are they serving the community—they're helping in a significant challenge we have, which is ensuring that all families, all Ontarians, have access to a family doctor—but on the other hand, they're improving their lives. They do well; we do well—right? They're better fully integrated right from the get-go.

I see this work taking place in my community, in Ottawa Centre. As you know, I represent a downtown part of Ottawa. My part of the riding attracts a lot of new immigrants who come; therefore, a lot of the immigration settlement agencies are located right in Ottawa Centre, and I have a really good working relationship with them. When I see the work of the Catholic Immigration Centre, led by Carl Nicholson, in terms of various bridge training programs they do; when I see the work of the Immigrant Women Services organization, led by Lucy Spencer, the work they're doing in terms of making sure that immigrant women have all the opportunities available to them—very, very important work. I was recently at their gala, talking about the example of my mother, who, as a lawyer, didn't practise law when she came, but spent her time making sure that her kids were doing well and succeeding through school. When both—

Hon. John Gerretsen: And she succeeded.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Well, she succeeded, no doubt, Minister. She did succeed in that way. But I kind of look at her—she never got to pursue her career, right? And she was trained for that. We can achieve both.

I look at the work of the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre, led by Sharon Kan—on Saturday they just celebrated their 35th anniversary—serving 8,000 clients a year, primarily of Chinese origin. It's incredible work they're doing, in terms of economic integration. They have a really successful program dealing with information technology professionals, those who may be coming from China, helping them integrate into the IT sector in Ottawa. Ottawa, as you know, is a very significant hub for that.

It's the same thing when I see the work of OCISO, the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, led by Hamdi Mohamed, in terms of various programs they run, especially language training programs and mentorship and menteeship programs, helping to integrate

immigrants who come to Ottawa into the broader community. Also, LASI World Skills, under the leadership of Mengistab Tsegaye, is doing very similar work when it comes to bridge training.

All these organizations in Ottawa Centre rely on the funding from the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, and they're all quite anxious. I've got to tell you, I speak with them quite regularly. They are quite concerned as to what is the future of that agreement and whether the federal government will be providing the necessary funds to ensure that all the important programs they provide are there.

Of course, we, the provincial government, will continue working with them, because it is our responsibility, but we need all partners at the table. It is not just the responsibility of one government over the other. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we are providing the necessary services to our newcomers. Like I said earlier, it is in our best interest. It is in our best interest.

I say to CIC, OCISO, LASI World Skills, OCCSC and IWSO that we're working really hard, and we need their help as well in ensuring that the federal government comes back to the table, renegotiates the agreement and provides the necessary dollars we need to continue their good work, because if you look at the results which have come out through the investments so far, they are very encouraging. They are extremely encouraging. We are helping our newcomers to integrate, because if we don't do so, if we fail to do so, we are failing ourselves. Forget that we are abdicating our responsibility—of course we are abdicating our responsibility—but we are going to be failing ourselves. If we fail to help the newcomers, we are not going to be putting ourselves in the competitive position we need to put ourselves in; and it's not really help—I use the word “help” loosely—it's to work with them. They're all coming to this province because they want to work hard and they want to contribute; and we need to make sure that we enable them, that we assist them and make it happen for them to meet those challenges.

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I can speak personally. It is not easy, and that is why it's important—we've talked a lot about the international scholarship—that we get the best and the brightest talent from around the world to come and make Ontario their home.

I am extremely disappointed with the position the official opposition has taken in terms of the international scholarship, and it actually hurts personally. We need to make sure that the destination of choice for the Ph.D.s of the world is Ontario, because when they come here and finish their education, that's where they will be contributing and benefiting society. That's where their inventions are going to be on the front pages of the world. Who knows how many Nobel award winners will be within that group?

We need to support programs like that. We need to support our newcomers through making sure that we have enough investment through—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm really pleased to rise in the House today to speak to motion number 29, which has been presented by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Immigration is a topic that's very near and dear and very personal to me. Some 57 years ago, not unlike the member for Ottawa Centre's family, our family immigrated to Canada. The circumstances, however, were very different. We lived in Shanghai, China, where my parents had a business, and after the Chinese revolution there was no place for westerners in Shanghai or in China. So it became an almost impossible task to leave China as late as my parents left it, which was in December 1949, on a freighter in very choppy wintry seas, and we landed in Israel.

My dad was a Jew, and Israel was a place where he still had some relatives. It was a place where we could go and live in a refugee camp. We lived in that camp for three years. I can't even imagine the hardship my parents endured. They had their children later in life, so they were well into their 40s when we were in the refugee camp in Israel. My mother actually had a baby, a son, who died right after being born, because I guess the conditions were so harsh there and at her age the pregnancy was tough.

So what I'm trying to say is that when immigrants come to Canada, they come with a story, they come with experience. And when they come to Canada and Canada embraces them and gives them opportunity, it is the most amazing light that's shone down on these individual families, which is what happened in our case.

We had relatives and friends strewn all over the world, and my mother had her choice of picking San Francisco, where my father's youngest sister was, or Toronto, where my father's nephew was. Both could sponsor us. My mother picked Toronto. She had heard about Canada, she had heard about the opportunities and she wanted her daughters to have those opportunities. So we came to Canada 57 years ago. The rest is almost history.

My parents came with some challenges, because they came with very little, they were well into their 40s, but we had the advantage of speaking the language and understanding a bit more about the culture than perhaps people coming from places that didn't have those advantages. So my sister and I integrated into school; my father, finally, was able to get a job. However, he did have to change his name, as a lot of immigrants did, because he couldn't get a job with a name like Isaac. So we changed our name to Davies, and life went on.

We have learned from that experience that it's really important as immigrants, as Canadians, first, to give back, to integrate and to have a personal responsibility for how life works in our communities, in our province and around the world. So I'm grateful that my parents provided my sister and me the opportunity by coming and settling in this absolutely amazing country. How fortunate that we actually live in Ontario. They provided a better life for my sister and me, and this gave me the opportunity to raise my own family now here as well, and they are raising their families in this wonderful province.

Times have changed, though, for new Canadians, and they're faced with far more difficult challenges. This government has talked time and time again about how they will remove the barriers for new Canadians with respect to the credentials being recognized and allowing them access to the skilled labour market. As my colleagues have already pointed out, this motion is asking for more money. It's asking for more money to be spent in Ontario but it doesn't say where, it doesn't say how, or it doesn't say in which particular programs. It also doesn't say what the results should be.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has proposed an amendment, and the motion would read:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the \$207 million that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper."

I think that adds that extra little credibility to what we want to do here in Ontario. This proposed amendment would help Ontario to focus on what is needed in order for newcomers to actually succeed here in our province.

Additionally, this proposed amendment would help the federal government to understand the programs it should be looking to provide. We need settlement programs that both respond to the needs of the newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario communities. We need this to ensure accountability.

I'm pleased to have been able to speak to this motion today. I hope that the amendment passes, as does the motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've been listening quite intently to the stories that various members have brought to this debate here in the Legislature. I think what is clear is that we, like everyone else, were immigrants to this country at one time or another; some as recently as a generation or two ago, some others of us more than that. I think we recognize that there needs to be something in order to deal with how we better integrate and how we better support those who immigrate to Canada into our communities because, if not, not only is it an injustice and a travesty to those individuals, but I think it's also, from what I'm hearing from the stories told, quite difficult on them and what it means to them as human beings and individuals.

I was quite taken aback by the comments just made by the member from—

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Burlington.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Burlington—I'm sorry; we're not allowed to use names. I always have to point, Speaker, because I don't know the ridings—and I didn't know that of her history.

It is always a little bit humbling in this place to hear other members talk about what their history is because it tells us that people have had to deal with fairly traumatic episodes in their lives or the lives of their families. I think it says a lot about who those people are, about how they overcame and about how they've been able to move on and try to do what they can in order to make life better for those who are here and those who will come after. I just wanted to say to the member from Burlington that I thought that was quite interesting.

In northern Ontario, people would think, "Well, you know, immigration: That's really a big-city issue. That's something we see in London or Hamilton or Toronto or Ottawa and those places." But I've got to tell you, there are more and more people immigrating into Ontario and more and more of them are coming to northern Ontario. I am quite surprised at the degree that our offices, both in Timmins and Kapuskasing, deal with immigration cases, not only because I'm co-located with our two federal members, both Charlie Angus and Carol Hughes, but also, I've been dealing with immigration issues since way back, when quite frankly I was on my own and it was a Liberal member who was holding that seat federally. As you know, it has now been redistributed federally; there are two seats up in my riding federally, and there's one lone provincial member carrying the weight by himself, but that's a whole other story.

But my point is this: There is an increasing amount of people who are moving into northern Ontario who have emigrated from different parts of the world, and it's not as in the past where it was only particular parts of the world. For example, most of the immigration that we saw in northern Ontario back in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s were mostly European immigrants—people from Italy, England, Scotland, Wales and from various countries in and around Europe, and the big immigration after the Second World War. But now we're seeing it from almost everywhere—from India, Pakistan, China, Indonesia. We have people coming from all over the world because people are choosing Canada. Why? Because it is one of the best places in the world to live.

Even in places like Timmins, Kapuskasing or Hearst, people do have problems trying to integrate into society as far as understanding how our democracy works, understanding how our system works, providing the type of support they need in order to get second-language training as far as English.

I notice the Speaker is sort of leaning over and getting ready, because it's almost that time.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got two minutes? Okay. I was trying to time it in time for you to not cut me off.

My point is, there's more that needs to be done in order to deal with how we properly support people once they do come back in and they do immigrate into our country. For example, for a lot of the people who I've

dealt with in Timmins–James Bay, it's an issue where their professional accreditation has not been recognized in Ontario and Canada. We have people who are physicians, electricians, engineers. I've dealt with various professionals over the past number of years who had studied in their home country and gone to university or college, got their trade certifications, got their professional diplomas, and here they are, trying to get work in Ontario. They're not able to get work in their own fields because their accreditation is not being recognized.

There's good reason for that, I understand, because in some cases, the training in Ontario might be superior and our standards may be higher, but we should do something to upgrade those skills quicker and allow them to be able to get that certification they need so that they can go on with their lives. If we're going to allow an engineer to move from Europe or from India or wherever it might be and say, "It's good for you to come to Canada and use your engineering skills," the least we should do is try to find a way to allow them to get their accreditation in a way that is a lot more user friendly when it comes to the ability of doing so.

The other issue is that of second-language training. There are a lot of people who immigrate into my particular riding who have English skills but they're somewhat limited, or have French skills and they're somewhat limited, and who certainly have a lot of work when it comes to the literacy that they need to be able to integrate into our society, either in French or in English. And, yes, there has been some progress—I know the francophone alphabétisation—I don't know how you say that in English; the literacy community—but there is still a lot that needs to be done in order to properly support those groups so that they're able to deal with trying to build up literacy skills with people who need to have stronger literacy skills so that they can get on with getting their accreditations and getting certified and whatever it is that they might have to do.

Being about that time of the clock, I will adjourn at this point and pick up this debate at another date.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8(a), this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to introduce Sarah Mistak, the sister of Tony Mistak, one of our pages. She's sitting in the west gallery.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please join me in welcoming two Richmond Hill firefighters in the east members' gallery: John Shillinglaw and Derek Hofrichter.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming a well-known, hard-working, dedicated constituent of mine and a person we truly love, my mother, Rose Ouellette.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a privilege for me to introduce Anita Record, who is in the members' east gallery today. She is head of the Peterborough branch of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: This is not an introduction, but I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of this Legislature be permitted to wear daffodil pins in recognition of Cancer Prevention Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to recognize the executive board of the OPFFA and representatives of professional firefighters from across the province. Members of the executive include: Fred LeBlanc, president; Barry Quinn, secretary treasurer; and seven of the district vice-presidents. From St. Catharines, we have firefighters Terry Colburn and Ryan Madill; and from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Debbie Conrad and John McBeth.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'd like to introduce Brad Grimwood and John Jetter from the professional firefighters.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce, in the west gallery, our president of the firefighters' association, Mr. Jim Holmes. Also, I believe you'll be introducing the top people there in a few minutes.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to introduce to the House Fida Oleiche, who is the mom of our page Alexandra from Hamilton–Mountain. Welcome.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I am delighted to introduce Andrew Rogerson, Kevin Aitcheson and Brad McCann, who are part of the Stratford Fire Department. We are delighted they're here for OPFFA Day.

Mr. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce two individuals from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Welcome to Queen's Park Alexi White and Meaghan Coker.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a number of guests as well: Steve Barkwell, Paul Konarowski, Craig Baird and Peter Dyson from the Oshawa fire department. Welcome, gentlemen.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm very pleased to introduce to the House today the president of the Brantford OPFFA, Mr. Tom Smith, who's a great firefighter as well. Tom, thanks for being here today.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you today members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association: Michael Gagnon from the Midland fire service, Glenn Higgins from the Orillia fire service—and I believe Kevin White is here somewhere as well from the Barrie fire service.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to introduce, from the Kingston firefighters, Ann Bryan and Jeff Olejnik. As well, I'd like to introduce Paul Gilmore, a former reeve of Loyalist township and Brian Pitts, who are here at Queen's Park today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome all the Ontario firefighters but also, more importantly, I suppose, Kendra Chopcian, who is from the Canadian Cancer

Society. We're here today educating MPPs about cancer in Ontario.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to introduce to the assembly today, visiting from the Thunder Bay Professional Fire Fighters Association, President Eric Nordlund and Phil Dzuba.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a great pleasure to introduce some guests from the Canadian Cancer Society in the east gallery: Jeff Brace, Sterling Johnston, Heather Gray and Carolyn Bourassa.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to introduce today the president of the Waterloo firefighters' association, John Deitrich; and also Steve Mayer.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to introduce Colin Hunter, who is here today from the Guelph fire service.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I also want to welcome Eric Nordlund and Philip Dzuba from the Thunder Bay Professional Fire Fighters Association, who I had a chance to meet with this morning. Also, I want to welcome Barry Quinn, who gave me some very good advice this morning.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Speaker, it gives me, indeed, real pleasure to introduce to you the convenor of the Canada India Foundation, which is engaging Canada and India through trade. His name is Aditya Jha. Let's welcome him.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Ellard Beaven from the Timmins firefighters, who's here visiting with us today. I would ask everybody to welcome Ellard.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm just awaiting the valiant members from the Mississauga Fire Fighters Association, who should be arriving any moment now: Mark Train, Chris Varcoe, Dave Rutka, Rob Ward and Ryan Coburn. Welcome to Queen's Park, wherever you may be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from York West and page Mahir Malik, we would like to welcome his mother, Farhat Malik; his father, Tahir Malik; and his sister Mahira Malik to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would like to welcome today in the Speaker's gallery Phil King of the London Professional Fire Fighters Association; my good friend Warren Scott from the St. Thomas Professional Firefighters Association; Barry Quinn, the secretary-treasurer of the OPFFA; Ann Bryan from Kingston; Eric Nordlund, 7th district vice-president; Philip Dzuba from Thunder Bay; Fred LeBlanc, the president; and Jeff Olejnik from Kingston. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. You have made an absolute mess of hydro policy in the province of Ontario, and Ontario families are stuck with

the bills. Rates are going through the roof and you come up with some new plan every other week. Now your latest, you claim, is going to cost \$87 billion a year. You say it's going to double hydro bills, but even your own Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, your very own task force, says that you have grossly understated what Ontario families are going to pay for your expensive energy experiments. Premier, if your own advisers don't believe you, why should Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to begin by thanking the thousands of Ontarians who helped lend shape to their plan. It's a long-term plan. It's the first of its kind in Ontario. We refuse to hide the details from the people of Ontario. We're going to be very upfront with them in terms of the shape of the plan, the values that inform that plan and all the costs associated with that.

I would encourage Ontario families to take the opportunity to become more familiar with the plan. They can do so by seeing it online. I can tell you, it's all about ensuring that over the course of the next 20 years, both our families and businesses have access to a clean, modern, reliable electricity system that will help us enjoy good-quality lives and help our businesses thrive. That's fundamentally what this 20-year electricity plan is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Oh, no, Premier. Ontario families have already seen what you're all about. They've seen their bills going through the roof: Rates are up under Premier McGuinty by 75% already, and 100% or more if you have one of Dalton McGuinty's smart meter tax machines. Premier, even industry observers do not believe your plan. They say, quite frankly, that your plan cannot be trusted to reflect the price tag you claim. It has not been accurately costed.

We all know that Premier McGuinty once said that bills will only go up 1%, and then he said, "Oh, I'll correct the record, Speaker," and the Premier said, "They're only going to go up 3%." Premier, they've gone up 75%. It's bordering on incompetence, and families are stuck with the bill. How much more are rates going up in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If my honourable colleague wants to argue figures, I would argue that he has to put some up. We've done that in our plan. We've been very specific, very straightforward and very honest with Ontarians.

We've also indicated that over the course of the plan, over 20 years, there is a real cost associated with this. It is, in fact, 3.5% a year that it'll go up on average. I think it's important to put that into some perspective. During the course of the past 20 years, our electricity costs went up, on average, 3.6%. So that's 3.5% per year on average going forward and 3.6% during the course of the past 20 years.

In addition to that, we're helping families. We're going to give them a clean energy benefit that will last for the ensuing five years to reduce the cost of their

electricity bills by 10%. We also have a seniors' energy and property tax credit; it's \$1,025. Two thirds of Ontario seniors are in a position to qualify—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's your problem: Quite frankly, nobody believes you anymore. You told them bills would go up 1%. You told them bills would go up 3%. Now, they're some 75% and climbing.

Even your own task force says that your expensive energy experiments, your sweetheart deals with foreign multinationals like Samsung or IKEA, cost way too much. The task force says that you are lowballing what families are going to pay for your expensive energy experiments. They say that you wildly overstate the number of jobs you claim you are going to create.

In short, Premier, you have a massive credibility problem when it comes to energy in the province of Ontario, and your mismanagement borders on absolute incompetence.

How much more are you going to raise energy rates for hard-working families who are saying, "Enough is enough is enough"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague again, it's time for him to put up. He's been offering critiques and commentary from the comfort of the sidelines, but sometimes in life you actually have to put up.

I'm going to say this to Ontarians by way of reassurance: Not only have we put in place a thoughtful, responsible, 20-year plan, but I'll tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to be experimenting with deregulation and causing electricity price hikes to the tune of 70%. We're not going to be putting an artificial cap on rates which cost our children \$1 billion, as they did. We're not going to be putting diesel generators into the hearts of our cities.

We're going to deliver clean air. We're going to deliver reliable electricity. We're going to deliver thousands of new jobs. We're going to become a global powerhouse in an exciting, revolutionary clean energy industry that's good news for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. We have many guests here today who are very interested in hearing the questions and the answers.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: It is obvious, Premier, that you have no clue whatsoever how to get

Ontario out of the incredible mess you've created in our energy system.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Education, Minister of Agriculture and a number of other ministers will please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And community and social services, and energy, and economic development.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you've made an incredible mess of Ontario's energy system, and senior citizens are paying for it with higher bills. Middle-class families are feeling the sting because of your incompetence. Small businesses are struggling to get by because of your expensive energy experiments. The Premier's solution is, when he's dug a hole, to keep digging it deeper and deeper.

It's time for change in the province. It's time for change in energy. The Ontario PCs will put consumers, the families and the businesses first in every decision we make.

Premier, why are you on the side of special interests who are getting fat and rich off these massive subsidies paid by Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've got a plan out now. It's 68 pages in length. It's very detailed, very comprehensive, very honest and very forthright.

They've been the official opposition for seven years. You would think that at some point along the way somebody over there might have said, "You know what? We think we owe Ontarians. As a matter of respect for Ontarians, we need to put forward a solid proposal when it comes to public policy." All they have put forward to this point in time is a blank piece of paper. I think that's unacceptable. We'll let Ontarians be the final judges in that regard.

The other point I want to make is this: Their plan—and they're not prepared to talk about this openly—is based on coal. It's a fuel that we've been burning as a species for centuries. We didn't move beyond the Stone Age because we ran out of stones. We're not going to move beyond coal under them, because apparently there's going to be still more coal coming. The plan that we're putting forward is clean, modern, reliable, and it's exciting.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean will withdraw the comment she just made.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I don't think you know what "forthright" means anymore. You may as well take your so-called plan and put it on the fiction shelf at the local library like your last two campaign platforms, where you told people you'd do one thing before the election and you did the complete opposite once you were elected. We're seeing this pattern over and over again.

You're saying that bills are going to go up to \$228 a month, on average, per family, that they're going to double; and you know and I know that you're lowballing these figures. Premier, \$228 a month could be a car payment for some families. I know that you've lost touch after seven years in office, but do you ever pause to think about the impact this is having on average, hard-working Ontario families, who are saying that enough is enough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Our plan is all about ensuring that we meet the needs of families, today and during the course of the next 20 years. We believe—and our plan has been informed by that belief and their values and their aspirations—that they're looking for reliable electricity, they want a modernized system that they can always count on and they also want clean electricity. We don't believe in burning coal anymore. We think that belongs to the past. I think we're too intelligent a population to continue to burn coal in Ontario. They see things differently.

My friend says he's concerned about the cost. Again, we should put these things in perspective. Electricity during the past 20 years, as I mentioned, has gone up 3.6% a year; natural gas during the past 20 years, 4.7% a year; cable TV during the past 20 years, 5% a year; fuel oil during the past 20 years, 5.2% a year; the average resale price of a home during the past 20 years has more than doubled. I think it's important to put that in some perspective. We're being honest; we're being forthright. Let's see their plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here is the difference between the Ontario PCs and the McGuinty Liberals. We believe energy policy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Planless in Seattle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I can find a flight to Seattle for someone.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's the difference: Ontario PCs believe energy policy is economic policy. It's about attracting jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I apologize. I just sat down, the honourable member just stood up, and suddenly the ministers start opening up.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Show some respect.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, no. The member from Halton should show some respect too when the Speaker is standing and speaking.

This is an issue that is of importance to the opposition, it's of importance to the government, and that being case, it's obviously very important to the citizens of Ontario. The citizens of Ontario want to hear this debate, the Speaker wants to hear this debate, the guests want to hear

this debate, and let's show some courtesy and allow good debate to take place in this chamber. Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker.

Premier, here is the difference: Ontario PCs believe energy policy is economic policy. It's about attracting good, well-paying jobs to the province of Ontario; and it's about ensuring that Ontario families can pay the bills, can stay in their homes, can start spending again. Premier McGuinty believes energy policy is all about social policy and massive subsidies to multinational corporations and sticking Ontario families with the bill. Premier, when did you get so out of touch that you don't understand that hydro bills are going through the roof and people want a change in direction—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have a solid plan. It's before the people of Ontario. We look forward to further discussing that with them. It's about clean air, it's about thousands of new jobs, and it's about the peace of mind that comes from knowing the electricity is going to be there when you need it.

I would argue respectfully to my honourable colleagues opposite that the price of admission to this debate is that you've got to have a plan. You got to move beyond rhetoric. This is a matter of important public policy. You can't just continue to offer criticism and commentary from the convenience of the sidelines. At some times you've got to step up; you've got to get into the game. You've got to put forward a plan.

We have a 68-page plan. It's thoughtful, responsible, comprehensive and honest. It's about building a bright electricity future for Ontarians. It's about clean air, it's about thousands of jobs, and it's about peace of mind that comes from knowing you're going to have electricity when you need it.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the government announced that they will be "proceeding with two new units at Darlington on a cost-effective basis." How will the government determine what cost-effective is?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, I can say something for the two opposition parties: They're very consistent. They are both plan-free when it comes to electricity. At some point in time—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's a plan-free zone over there.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's a PFZ: a plan-free zone. There's not a lot of thought going on over there, just lots of rhetoric.

My honourable colleague, the leader of the NDP, believes that we should eliminate nuclear generation in Ontario. That's irresponsible. One half of our electricity that is generated today in the province of Ontario comes from nuclear. More than that, there are tens of thousands of jobs that are associated with that industry. We believe

that it's important to continue to maintain our 50% capacity.

More than that, we think there are some exciting global opportunities when it comes to Canadian nuclear technology to create even more jobs for Ontarians. I've been to India, I've been to China; they're interested in our technology and we should get with the program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the energy minister seemed to be pulling numbers out of thin air. But for families that were just told that they're going to be paying \$700 more a year for hydro within the next five years, this isn't make-believe. Who will be determining whether this government's nuclear plans are actually cost-effective, and when will they be doing that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will be working as hard as we can when it comes to ensuring that we get the lowest possible cost for our nuclear investments. We're doing whatever we can to place as much of the risk as we reasonably can on to those of the private sector.

But I think the point that I really want to make, and I'd encourage my honourable colleague to accept, is that there's a cost associated to building new electricity generation. There's simply no escaping that. I think we need to be upfront with Ontarians about that. Because they have no specific plan, I'm guessing that they believe that we can actually supply ourselves with clean electricity during the course of the next 20 years on a cost-free basis. That's not reasonable. That's not responsible. It's hardly thoughtful. I think we owe more to Ontarians than just that. That's why we put out a very thoughtful, responsible 68-page plan. It details everything. It's about doing what Ontarians want us to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier may not want to answer these questions, but they matter to the people who will be stuck with the bill. The Bruce refurb has cost \$2.4 billion a unit so far and it's not complete yet. The government's new nuclear plan calls for 10 refurbished units. Where is the government's evidence that those 10 refurbished units will cost less than \$25 billion in total, and will it share that evidence with the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me tell you about one of the ways that we're doing new business when it comes to the nuclear industry in Ontario. Bruce nuclear centre is refurbishing two of its nuclear units. There are some pretty significant cost overruns but, because of the contracts we've entered into, the private sector is responsible for all those overruns. I just think that's the responsible way to go. That's what we're talking about now when it comes to investing in the nuclear industry.

The other thing I'd encourage my honourable colleague to remember is that there are some 50,000 to 55,000 jobs today tied up in the nuclear industry. What does she say to those families as she remains committed to shutting down the nuclear sector in Ontario? Those are a lot of families and a lot of taxes that are paid to support

our schools, to support our hospitals and to support our quality of life.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Ontario families have seen the cost of everything from private sweetheart deals to donations to the Ontario Liberal Party slapped on their hydro bills. They don't want to write any more blank cheques. Does the government have any evidence whatsoever that all the 10 nuclear refurbishments are going to cost less than \$25 billion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I would encourage my honourable colleague—because we're waiting here with bated breath on this side of the House for a specific proposal. It doesn't have to be a concrete plan, just even a hint—something that might entice us or excite us to a modest extent to gain a better understanding as to the workings of the NDP brain when it comes to electricity. We'd like to better understand that.

Again, we've put forward a very specific, thoughtful, responsible plan, and it's designed to ensure that over the course of the next 20 years, Ontario children have clean air to breathe. We think it's important to shut down coal and move beyond the fuel that we should have stopped burning, frankly, a long time ago.

We also are very excited about the prospects of becoming a global powerhouse in the clean energy technology industry. We're number one in North America when it comes to cars; we want to be number one when it comes to clean energy technologies.

Finally, we want to give Ontarians the peace of mind that comes from knowing that when you flick on the switch, the lights will come on because we have a reliable supply of electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's some free advice for this government: When a contractor offers an estimate that's too good to be true, it's probably too good to be true. Right now, the Premier sounds like the guy promising to fix your leaky roof for half the price. It sounds good until he's almost done; then, all of a sudden, the estimate goes way up.

Can the Premier break down the \$33-billion nuclear estimate? How much of that is going on refurbishment and how much to build new units?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd love to be able to enter a more specific debate with my honourable colleague, but she doesn't have any proposals. There's nothing that we can compare our plan to.

She says that she's not happy with the \$33-billion figure we put to our nuclear investment, but she's not telling us how much she'd assign to her nuclear investment.

She says that she doesn't like the fact that we continue to burn coal in Ontario, but on the other hand, she says she doesn't like the cost associated with clean energy technology.

Again, we've put something out here. We're proud of this plan. It has been informed by the values and the thinking of thousands of Ontarians. What we're now asking on behalf of all Ontarians is, if we're going to enter into an informed and intelligent debate, it's time for the opposition parties to put up. They've got to put forward their plan so that we can have a good conversation about this. But until that point in time, we stand very much behind our plan. We're very confident in our plan, confident it's doing the right thing for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This province has a long history of nuclear cost overruns, and Ontario families are still paying for it.

Darlington was supposed to cost less than \$3 billion. The final bill was more than \$14 billion. The Bruce refurb was supposed to cost less than \$3 billion. The bill is now at almost \$5 billion and counting.

The government says their nuclear plan will be cost-effective. Who will determine that? And before they proceed, will people get a chance in this province to compare the real cost of this plan with more affordable alternatives?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Ontario.ca/energyplan. That's where Ontarians can find our plan. I would refer them to plans put forward by the official opposition and the NDP if there were such plans, but there are no such plans. I would have offered to advertise their plans here today for the people of Ontario, but those plans don't exist. I say again, when it comes to the opposition, there is consistency there: They are a plan-free zone.

1100

I think the price of admission for entering into this debate now, after seven years, is that you've got to have a plan. They don't have a plan. I think they lose their credibility. I think they lose their capacity to comment intelligently, because we've got a plan and we're proud of our plan. It meets the needs of Ontario families. It meets the needs of Ontario businesses. It's about clean air, thousands of jobs, an exciting new industry and reliable electricity.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would remind the honourable members from Her Majesty's loyal opposition that the comments that I directed at the government members do go both ways. We do need to be respectful.

New question?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday I raised the sweetheart deal that you signed that pays Ikea, the Swedish furniture giant that had profits last year of 2.5 billion euros, \$700,000 a year to produce power for maybe up to 100 homes. For Ontario seniors and busy families, that works out to \$5,000 more per year than they pay for hydro at current prices; a \$5,000-per-home subsidy for Ikea.

The plan that you released yesterday confirms that you have signed 16,000 contracts as part of your expensive green energy experiment. How many Ontario seniors and families can expect to overpay \$5,000 a year or more to turn on the lights because of your expensive plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague talks about these sweetheart deals with some apparent revulsion. Let's talk about these thousands and thousands of sweetheart deals.

John Sauve farms 2,000 acres in the Essex area. He grows corn, soybeans and wheat. He currently has one ground-mounted 10-kilowatt solar generator. That's one of the sweetheart deals he's talking about.

Stan Gillier farms 1,500 acres in Chatham-Kent. He grows tomatoes, peas, corn, soybeans and wheat. He has one ground-mounted 10-kilowatt solar generator.

Steve and Alice Uher operate a small farm outside of Blenheim with sheep and horses. They also run a successful Purina feed dealership for the area. They have constructed a 10-kilowatt solar generator on the roof of their barn.

Those are some of the sweetheart deals that he opposes in the province of Ontario, which is strengthening rural Ontario and is helping our farmers supplement their income. What has he got against farmers? What has he got against supplementing their income?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm hoping that if I let you keep going, you will shout it out of yourselves.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It might be more fun just to let the clock run.

Just imagine what our guests are thinking, what these students who are sitting up here, likely grade 5 students studying government right now, are thinking?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Premier talked about three. I talked about one that pays a Swedish retail giant that made over \$2.5 billion in profit last year a subsidy of \$700,000 a year out of your green energy plan.

The 16,000 contracts you've signed so far are 20-year deals. Ontario families will pay power producers up to 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour for power that costs five to six cents.

Ontario seniors and families are already getting up early to shower or staying up late to do laundry as a result of your smart meter/time-of-use experiment. They cannot afford to pay more than 10 times as much to turn on the lights generated by your expensive green energy experiments.

Will you give Ontario families a chance to catch up? Stop signing these deals that give away these massive subsidies to giants like IKEA, which makes \$2.5 billion in profit a year.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand why my honourable colleague doesn't want to speak to rural Ontario and to Ontario farmers specifically, because they

stand to benefit a great deal from our Green Energy Act and our electricity plan.

I talked about John Sauve, who's growing corn, soybeans and wheat; about Stan Gillier, who's growing tomatoes, peas, corn, soybeans and wheat; and about the Uher family, who have sheep and horses and are running a successful Purina feed dealership. There are thousands of farmers like them around the province who are benefiting under our plan. It provides them with a modest supplement to their farm income. At the same time, it's providing all of us with clean energy.

I think it's a win-win. I think it's something that rural Ontario has been looking for for a long time. I think it's something that our farmers in particular appreciate. So I'd ask my honourable colleague to stand up and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Campaign 2000's new report card shows that child poverty has increased to over 15% in Ontario, and it's growing and rising as I speak.

When the McGuinty government designed its 25 in 5 poverty strategy, was it intending to increase child poverty by 25% over five years? If so, you've succeeded brilliantly.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: To the minister responsible for poverty.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have a chance to speak to this issue. We thank Campaign 2000 for their report and for being one of the groups whose input helped shape our government's poverty reduction strategy.

Ontario's strategy is the country's most ambitious and aggressive poverty reduction strategy. I want to quote, if I can, the report today, where Campaign 2000 acknowledges the reality of the worldwide global economic recession. They say: "Despite tight fiscal times the 2009 and 2010 provincial budgets included a number of measures that have benefited low-income families, including increases to the minimum wage and the Ontario child benefit, stimulus spending on affordable housing, funding to save child care subsidies and implementation of full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds."

Campaign 2000 gets it. They understand that these initiatives are helping Ontario families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1110

Mr. Michael Prue: Campaign 2000 also told you that you're doing nothing on housing, that you're doing nothing on the poverty rate, that you're doing nothing to help the poor. They also said that. Quote that part.

Last week, we learned that food bank usage is up 28% in this province. Today, we learned that more Ontarians are falling into poverty. Even with the Ontario child

benefit, a single mother with one child lives \$10,000 below the poverty line.

Campaign 2000 says that the McGuinty government must implement a housing benefit and provide a healthy food allowance for social assistance recipients. When? Please tell us, when will this government do something, anything at all, to help the poor?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very proud of the aggressive plan that we've put in place to reduce poverty.

I've learned a lot of lessons in my life from my grandmother, and one of them is: Actions speak louder than words. You voted against our six increases on social assistance, you voted against our creation of 22,000 new affordable child care spaces, you voted against stabilizing the rent bank and providing over 30,000 rent supplements, you voted against raising the minimum wage, and you voted against taking 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls.

Everyone needs to be part of the solution. When will the NDP start being part of the solution, work with Ontarians and help Ontario families have a better future? That's what we're doing on this side of the House. We're two years into a five-year plan. We'll continue doing that work.

There's a lot more work to do, but we're proud of the steps that we take on this side of the House every single day. They're action steps; they're much louder than those words.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Energy. Ontario's energy system presents a number of challenges, many of them due to the absolute shambles the system was found in seven years ago. A well-thought-out overhaul of the way electricity serves Ontarians is no small undertaking. It takes careful planning. Oakville and Ontario families want clean air, they want to stop burning coal, they want an economy that supports jobs and renewable energy, and they want to be sure the lights come on.

You presented Ontario's updated long-term energy plan. It touches on a number of critical issues, but my question to the minister is, can Ontarians be assured that this plan fully addresses the issues of coal, jobs and reliability that I've just mentioned?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. I'm pleased to be able to answer "yes" on all three of the items that the member has raised.

Our updated long-term energy plan fully addresses the concern of shutting down coal by 2014. In fact, I can tell the member that we'll be shutting down two additional units before the end of 2011. That's three years ahead of schedule. Further to that, just to give you an idea as to the impact of doing that, shutting down Ontario's dirty coal-fired plants is like taking seven million cars off of Ontario roads.

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Tories are interjecting. The Tories don't support us doing it. The Tories don't respect the fact that taking seven million cars off the roads of Ontario—that's almost all the cars in Ontario—would improve the quality of our air.

I haven't run into an Ontario family yet—an Ontario mother, father or grandparent—who doesn't want a cleaner, brighter, more healthy future—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member from Renfrew that we need to hear these questions, and the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That's the kind of certainty that we need in this province. Representing Oakville and the southwest GTA, I can tell you that the last thing that my constituents need is more coal pollution in the air that we breathe.

It astounds me, though, that planning for the future and consulting with Ontario's industry, environmentalists, First Nations communities, organized labour and others is a relatively new process in Ontario.

I mentioned certainty of direction through planning at the beginning of my question. So, to the minister once again, will Ontarians be able to count on this certainty through open and thoughtful energy planning and consultation as we move forward?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very proud to be part of the only party in this province that's being absolutely straight up with Ontarians when it comes to planning for our shared energy future.

What Ontarians need to hear from the Leader of the Opposition is, what is his plan? What is his plan for a strong, modern, reliable, clean energy system? I can understand why he doesn't want to talk about his record on energy. Clearly, he left this province in an absolute shambles when he was sitting in cabinet—not enough power to meet demand and the use of coal going up by 127%.

The Tories have absolutely nothing to offer Ontarians except a trip back to those dark and dirty days when our energy system had to rely on cheaper—yes—but dirty, unreliable coal.

Ontarians need to know where the Leader of the Opposition stands. Ontarians deserve to know. Right now, we know where he stands. He will kill the thousands of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Health. York Central Hospital has had a chronic deficit problem, running a \$4-million deficit last year and an \$11-million deficit this year. Despite the mismanagement, \$50,000 was diverted from front-line health care to pay the former CEO a bonus, and another \$93,000 was

diverted from front-line health care for a raise and bonus for her chief of staff. The bonuses were handed out by none other than Tony Genco, the former treasurer and chair of the hospital and current federal Liberal candidate for Vaughan, and they were approved by you.

How can you justify diverting almost \$150,000 from front-line 905 health services to the people mismanaging York Central Hospital—those people being you and Tony Genco?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very pleased to say that I was actually at York Central Hospital just yesterday. I was there with four of my colleagues and we were celebrating the tremendous work that is happening at York Central Hospital. I had the honour of meeting with the new CEO; the acting chair; members of the board; Dr. Grossman, the chief of the medical staff—a number of people—and they walked me through the changes that they are making at that hospital.

I can tell you that I was enormously impressed with their focus on quality and fiscal responsibility. I think everyone involved with York Central Hospital—and that would include the board chair, Tony Genco—should be very, very proud of the work that they have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The former CEO, Minister, who received the \$50,000 bonus, was undoubtedly grateful to you and Tony Genco for overlooking her mismanagement of the hospital budget. In fact, disclosure reports revealed that she donated \$1,500 to the McGuinty Liberals.

The cozy relationship doesn't end there. Yesterday, as you point out, you swooped into York Central and announced \$12 million, clearing the hospital's deficit and Tony Genco's spotty management record just in time for a federal vote. Meanwhile, McGuinty Liberals, including the member for Vaughan, are packing the campaign office of Tony Genco, York Central Hospital's former chair, in the lead-up to the by-election.

You spent \$15 million in Toronto Centre saving a hospital the day before polls opened there. What makes you think you can buy Liberal federal seats?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the honourable member to withdraw the last comment that he made in that question.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The party opposite might be focused on the federal by-election; on our side, we're focused on improving health care. Let me tell you, I don't think it's very becoming of a member who represents a riding, who represents constituents who are benefiting from the extraordinary expansion at York Central Hospital. He owes it to the people of his community to at least get his facts straight.

1120

Yesterday's announcement: I was very pleased to be at York Central Hospital and met with the CEO, Altaf Stationwala, who is an extraordinary individual. What I announced yesterday is that we're very pleased to pro-

vide PCOP funding, post-construction operating funding, so that they can put that great new space to work for the benefit of the people of that region, including the constituents of that member.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On November 15, Nova Scotia introduced new bicycle safety legislation, the one-metre rule, which requires drivers to leave one metre of open space between the vehicle and cyclists when passing. The Nova Scotia government has taken steps to make roads safer for cyclists and motorists. Is the Ontario government also going to bring in the one-metre rule? If so, when?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member opposite because I know that underlying her question—in fact, explicit in her question—is a concern for making roads safer for cyclists and people driving cars.

I know she knows that currently the official drivers' handbook advises motorists to allow at least one metre when they're passing a cyclist, and the Highway Traffic Act requires vehicles meeting a person travelling on a bicycle to allow sufficient room on the roadway to pass.

But I also know she's asking whether we're going to go further. I want her to know we are reviewing the cycling policy. We're doing a number of other things, including, this last summer and fall, paving a metre of shoulder along Highway 6, so that, for cyclists and drivers, that road would be safer. I'll follow up in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The one-metre rule is in place in jurisdictions across the United States and in France, Germany and Spain. The city of Toronto bicycle and motor vehicle collision study found it was the number one cause of cyclist fatalities, and "motorists overtaking" was the number two leading cause of car-bike collisions. Why is this government not acting on road safety for all people?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are actually acting on road safety in a number of ways. I was just saying that we have worked on paving the shoulders on Highway 6, 23 kilometres on Manitoulin Island, 68 kilometres along the Bruce Peninsula. What we're doing is, we're working with the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Metrolinx to make sure that we have the criteria in place to make decisions about further paving of shoulders.

But, as I said earlier, we are reviewing our cycling policy. We've been working with the Share the Road folks. We're looking at other jurisdictions like BC and Quebec. We're looking at what we can do to facilitate the safe use of roads by cyclists and vehicles.

I think the member opposite is not asking a question that is really in opposition to what we're doing. We're working to increase safety on our roads for everyone.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. There are several important infrastructure

stimulus projects under way in my riding of London—Fanshawe. Some of those projects are \$400,000, \$500,000, \$1 million to widen streets, build bridges, build community centres or deal with some issues in our riding of London—Fanshawe.

As you know, those stimulus projects should meet the deadline of March 2011, but some people came to my office and raised concerns about those projects. As you know, some of them are not able to meet the deadline, so they're wondering, what are we going to do with those people who are not able to meet the deadline?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the question. Ninety-eight percent of infrastructure stimulus projects are on track for completion before the deadline. Sometimes there are unavoidable delays, and I've taken the issue up with the federal government, asking them to give Ontario communities the flexibility they need. In August, the Premier said, "We can't walk away from projects that are four walls waiting for a roof." No, we can't. We can't walk away from 166 projects that may not be complete by March 31, or the 9,100 jobs they represent.

I call on the federal government to extend the stimulus deadline for these projects by one more construction season, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition to do the same: to stand up for Ontarians, including the YMCA in his own riding, who need more time; to stand up and ask the federal government to be reasonable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the minister for showing flexibility, and I hope the federal government will listen to his request and approach. As you know, and as many people in this province know, we invested more than \$28 billion across the province of Ontario to create almost 300,000 jobs.

Beyond the creation of jobs, I think the minister and our government mean to support another initiative and goal. Can the minister explain to the people of Ontario and to us what he means by supporting more than job creation in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member is right. The infrastructure stimulus program isn't just about investing in the economy; it's also about making investments that will improve Ontarians' quality of life.

For example, in about 50 Ontario communities, communities including Tweed, Markham and Larder Lake, the legacy of the stimulus program will be a new or better library. In about 450 neighbourhoods, including Mountain Gardens in Burlington, Riverdale in Toronto's east end and Hintonburg in Ottawa, the legacy will be a park to help Ontarians maintain a healthy lifestyle.

We're also building or improving 11 airports, more than 700 road segments and 40 fire halls. The list goes on and on, and the point is clear: Across this province, our stimulus investments are building the kind of Ontario we all want to live in.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Attorney General. Justice is being overshadowed by injustice in

Ontario. Justice Nola Garton may declare a second mistrial in the case of Erika Mendieta, who allegedly beat her two-year-old daughter Emmily to death seven years ago. Why? Paul Alexander, assistant crown prosecutor during the first trial, was making faces at the jury and Ms. Mendieta during her testimony. Today, Alexander is still working while the chief prosecutor investigates his bizarre behaviour.

Today, Emmily would be 10 years old. Justice for Emmily's horrific death has been delayed again. This is all happening under your watch, and the public is demanding answers. When will you hold Alexander to account?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Of course, our sympathies and our first thoughts are with the family, with those directly affected. We're doing everything we can to get this prosecution proceeding as quickly as possible. I have to tell you that in 30 years with the criminal justice system, I've never heard of a case quite like this. The chief prosecutor is investigating this matter and will take the appropriate action.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, a judge in Ontario threw this person out of court, and you're waiting for a bureaucrat to make a decision. A disturbing trend is unfolding in Ontario justice.

Last week, charges were withdrawn against Tzvi Erez, who allegedly defrauded Willy Tencer of \$1.2 million. Why? A lack of resources has created competition for limited trial time and this case was not deemed serious enough.

Under your leadership, crown counsel are visiting courtrooms to make faces at juries, causing mistrials, and courts have such a serious lack of resources that charges are being withdrawn. You said you don't walk away from criminal cases, but in this case, are the facts not proving otherwise?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I've never heard of a case quite like this in 30 years, and I've heard of a lot of cases—from this individual or anybody else, I've never heard of a case quite like this.

The chief prosecutor is the one who is directly responsible. He is doing what we all know characterizes every element of our justice system: He's making sure that he has the facts before acting. No matter how egregious, or not, a situation looks, we all want to have the facts before acting. The appropriate action will be taken.

1130

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Does the minister believe that private health care records of London hospital patients should be in the hands of an American corporation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do understand that there are some changes under way at London Health Sciences Centre and that there have been concerns raised about the security of that health care information. What I can say

absolutely is that anyone doing business in the province of Ontario simply must comply with Ontario privacy legislation. We have some of the toughest privacy legislation here in Ontario, and that legislation will be honoured in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: London Health Sciences' IT department not only supports the health records of patients in this hospital, but also provides support for nine other regional hospitals. By outsourcing to an American company, the front-line staff and hospitals will be forced to call the US when something goes wrong.

This deal threatens patients' privacy and hurts the local economy with yet more job losses in London. In the minister's own hometown, why is she allowing patients' privacy to be sold off to an American firm?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm afraid that the question doesn't really reflect the facts in this particular situation. All of our hospitals across the province are working very, very hard to make changes within their organization to improve patient care. That is exactly what London Health Sciences Centre is doing. It is exactly what they should be doing.

As I said in the initial question, every organization operating in Ontario, no matter where they get that support, must comply with our personal health protection privacy legislation. There is no question that London Health Sciences and St. Joe's will ensure the safety and security of their records.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Education. There is an African proverb which states, "It takes a village to raise a child." I think we can all appreciate the importance of that statement and the message it carries with it. It suggests that all members of society, including governments and businesses, have a role to play in ensuring that the next generation is equipped with the knowledge necessary to become engaged and productive citizens.

Constituents in my riding know that education can take many forms and that our communities play an important role in ensuring our youngest learners get the necessary experience in our schools, our community and the workforce. What can I tell my constituents our government is doing to help our students get the experience they need outside the classroom?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It's an important question, because I, too, have had constituents who have come to me with the same question. We have been working very hard with partners in business. Through Passport to Prosperity, an independent outside group made up largely of employers—they have also understood the benefit of working with school boards to provide students with those hands-on opportunities.

I'm happy to say that this actually marks the first-ever Experiential Learning Week. It's an opportunity for us to recognize some 40,000 private sector employers who are

looking to engage secondary school students, give them experiences so they understand the types of careers they might want to pursue when they graduate from secondary school.

This is an excellent partnership. It's working well for employers and also for students. It's enabling them to be successful and understand what careers might be available to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Like the rest of Canada, Ontario faces two trends that we must take into consideration: First, our workforce is rapidly aging, and there is an ever-increasing need for workers with higher levels of education, skills and experience. Parents in my riding want to know that their children are being prepared with the skills they need.

Statistics Canada estimates that in six years, workers about to retire will outnumber those workers entering the workforce around the same time. According to the Canadian Council on Learning, 70% of Canadian workers will require some form of post-secondary education. Our students are going to need to possess a higher level of skills than previous generations if our economy is to grow and remain globally competitive.

Minister, is this government doing enough to make sure our students will be competitive in tomorrow's economy?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We are working definitely to support students. We very much appreciate the partnership of the private sector. Some levels of government as well have also participated to support students with work opportunities while they're in school.

We have implemented a very unique, successful program in our secondary schools. It's called the specialist high skills majors program. I visited many of these. I actually went to a school not so very long ago where students were working in the construction course, where they were understanding how they should plumb, how they should wire or how they should do drywall or tiling. These were skills which they were getting hands-on experience with, and they had professionals coming in to the workplace to support them.

We have specialist high skills majors in agriculture, hospitality, tourism, environment, health and wellness, so our students are getting—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: To the Minister of Agriculture: In July you announced the continuation of the grain and oilseeds business risk management program, stating that prices had dropped more than 25%. However, the chair of the Grain Farmers of Ontario recently stated that the crop has been excellent and that prices keep going up every day.

Grain and oilseeds farmers have benefited, but not everyone else. Livestock farmers continue to face low prices and high input costs. Hog and cattle prices have

dropped well below the 25% that grain and oilseeds did, but they received no support.

Minister, will you commit to using some of the money allocated for grain and oilseeds to create a cost-of-production risk management program for livestock farmers who are suffering today?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to answer the question. I can say that we have worked very hard with our farmers and with our farm organizations. We recognize that the current suite of programs is not providing the predictability, the bankability and the stability that are needed in order to make our farms successful. So we have taken that message to the federal government, and for the first time, there is recognition from our federal government that the suite of programs is not working. Multiple negative-margin years have not provided the stability, and the programs that are in place, with all three levels at the table—that's our federal government, our provincial government and our farmers—this is the suite of programs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Madam Minister, I'm disappointed that you're back to being a lobbyist instead of a minister.

Recently, Alberta announced an extension to its cattle price insurance program. Soon, all Alberta beef farmers will have a cost-of-production business risk management program. Once again, the Alberta government is taking a strong leadership role to help their farmers.

Ontario producers compete against these farmers, and they are at a disadvantage when they are denied similar programs—not federal; provincial. Alberta's agriculture minister called the program an "Alberta solution." Minister, when are Ontario's livestock farmers going to receive a made-in-Ontario solution from the Ontario government that's supposed to be representing their interests?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I simply don't understand why the members from across the way continue to apologize for our federal government. Our programs have always been all three levels working together, because our farmers know that's what meets their needs. I simply would ask the members that as we work with our organizations, they'll be looking for their support, and they'll be looking for their support at the federal level as well.

We have brought forward a grain and oilseeds risk management program. We then extended it for a year, but they voted against that. So I say to them: We are committed to working with our farmers to bring forward a suite of programs that will address their concerns, assure and give them bankability, predictability and stability. That is what our farmers require. They require programs that meet their needs for now and into the future. We will not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last Friday night, my colleague MPP Paul

Miller and I were in Cornwall. We went out for dinner, and we went to the Best Western hotel. As I always do now, I asked the server about the hotel's tip-out policy. I was dismayed to learn that that hotel takes 2.5% of the gross bill and it steals the wages of the servers, whether or not an actual tip is given. On top of that, the management charged their workers for breakage and for Visa fees as well.

Does this minister think it's fair employment practice to charge people in Cornwall and across Ontario for the privilege of working?

1140

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, let me reiterate that we understand how hard waiters, waitresses and all those who work in the hospitality sector work. They provide services to all of us, as the member experienced when he went out to a restaurant in Cornwall.

I have said, and I repeat, that we have many protections here in the province of Ontario when it comes to employment standards. To anyone who feels that their rights have been violated, I encourage them to contact the Ministry of Labour.

We have gone a long way to helping many, and especially those who work within these service industries, in large part due to how we've increased the minimum wage year over year. We have the highest minimum wage now in the entire country, of all provinces.

We will continue to be on the side of workers and continue to protect workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: In Cornwall, in this hotel, the servers are anxious for this government to act on Bill 114. The workers at the Best Western have articles about the bill posted in the kitchen, including that excellent article by Christina Blizzard. I expect them to put up the copy of the transcript from today on that wall as well.

These workers asked me to ensure that they would finally get the protection they need and demand. I promised I would continue to demand answers from this minister until we finally get one.

Minister, when will this government take the steps necessary to protect our lowest-paid workers and ban the practice of tipping out to owners, rich owners, like the Best Western hotel?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We have thousands of businesses across this province, many of them in the hospitality sector being small businesses, and the member gets up in this House and just smears all of them with the same brush. I think that's very unfortunate.

Having spoken to those business owners as well as to their employees, the hard-working staff, those waiters and waitress, we know that the businesses in Ontario that are successful are those that are caring and respectful of their staff and that are fair when it comes to their wages, when it comes to ensuring that their rights are protected. Again, if anyone feels that their rights have been violated, I encourage them to contact the Ministry of Labour.

When it comes to prosecutions, that member has no record to stand on because from 1989 to 2003, they had

97 prosecutions under the ESA, the Employment Standards Act—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: My point of order relates to standing order 99, which deals with written questions.

Speaker, I'm well aware of the fact that you have no authority to direct the nature of the response, but I do want to register with you my concern and my belief that the way certain questions have been responded to by the Ministry of Transportation specifically, as well as the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and, just today, the Ministry of Energy is, in fact, a genuine grievance that I want to table with you, and I ask you to rule or to at the very least speak to this issue that I believe is a further erosion of the role of private members in this place.

In your comments yesterday with regard to the point of privilege that was raised, you expressed serious concern about what you referred to as "casual diminishment of the legitimate and key role of the opposition and of this House." I believe that the way we are being dealt with—and I, specifically, with regard to the questions that I raised with the Ministry of Transportation—is in fact that; it is, in fact, a contempt of my responsibilities as a member of this Legislature when I seek to get serious and legitimate answers from the Ministry of Transportation.

I want to refer you to O'Brien and Bosc in their reference to guidelines for written questions. On page 520, it specifically states: "Given that the purpose of a written question is to seek and receive a precise, detailed answer, it is incumbent on a member submitting a question for the Notice Paper 'to ensure that it is formulated carefully enough to elicit the precise information sought.'" I think that that reference and the references in the standing orders presume that a member, first of all, will be specific in terms of the wording of the question so that we can expect specific information back from the ministry.

I want to provide you with my questions and the responses because I would like to know from you as to whether the type of response that I have received as a member is at all respectful, first of all, of me as a member of the Legislature, and if it's appropriate that these are the kinds of responses that I and any other member would receive.

My first question to the ministry was as follows: "Would the Minister of Transportation provide details as to the number of medical professionals and their professional qualifications, who have the responsibility for reviewing files and rendering decisions for driver's licence suspensions and reinstatements and specify whether they are full-time, part-time or contract employees?"

I had a very specific reason for asking that precise question. Here is the minister's response: "Under the Highway Traffic Act, both physicians and optometrists are required to report to the registrar of motor vehicles

any patient age 16 or over who may be suffering from a medical/visual condition that may impair driving ability. Ontario is the first Canadian jurisdiction to introduce mandatory reporting.” That response has absolutely nothing to do with any of the specifics that I put to the ministry in my question.

My second question was as follows: “Would the Minister of Transportation provide details as to the number of staff employed by the ministry who have responsibility for processing driver’s licence suspensions and reinstatements?” A very specific question.

Here is the response: “When a report is received by the ministry, it is screened and prioritized according to risk to road safety. When a decision is made to suspend the driving privilege, the ministry sends the individual a formal notice of suspension by regular mail and a letter which will advise what type of medical information is required to have the case considered for reinstatement.” Not even a semblance of relationship to the question that I asked.

My next question, and please bear with me because there’s an important point that I am making here. The question is this: “Would the Minister of Transportation provide a detailed summary of the number of driver’s licences that are under suspension for medical impairments including impaired vision and provide the ages of the suspended drivers?”

1150

Here is the response: “The driving privilege will be considered for reinstatement when the appropriate medical information is received and reviewed. If the report indicates that the medical standards are met, and there are no other outstanding suspensions on the driving record, the ministry sends the individual a letter advising the outcome of the review and, where applicable, a notice of reinstatement is mailed.”

I can go on. I have a similar response from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I just received a letter, a response, from the Ministry of Energy. My question was very specific, and the best the ministry could do is refer me to a website. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services referred me to the freedom-of-information process, so that I, as a member of this Legislature, am forced to go through freedom of information to get specific information that is available to the ministry, who have staff to provide that kind of information.

Speaker, I am at a loss. I say to you that the treatment that I have received from these ministries as a member of this Legislature is an insult to me as a member of this House. It is, in my opinion, not only disrespectful, but it directly erodes my ability to carry out my responsibilities as a member of this House.

I ask you, Speaker, to use your authority to, at the very least—if you cannot find that in fact this is a *prima facie* case of privilege, which I believe it really is—agree that I have a legitimate and genuine grievance as to how I am being treated and I know other members are being treated as members of this Legislature.

I leave this with you, Speaker, and I ask for your support, not only on my behalf but on behalf of all mem-

bers of this House, particularly members of the opposition, as we seek to do our job in this place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I’m happy to report to the House that all order paper questions that are due have been answered. In this case, as the member for Newmarket–Aurora has indicated, he is not pleased with the answers.

In fact, the rules that we have before us that rule this Legislature do not provide for a provision for satisfaction with answers to written questions. Under 99(d):

“The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sessional days....”

“The answers to such written questions shall be given to the member who asked the question and to the Clerk of the House....”

Those are the provisions that are in the standing orders.

This question, a question of privilege, has been raised in this House on a number of occasions. I would just refer the members to the member for Dufferin–Caledon’s question on May 18, 2010, where she raised a point of order regarding order paper questions. You, Mr. Speaker, responded:

“I’d just like to say to the member that numerous Speakers have ruled that during oral question period ministers may answer a question any way they see fit. It’s also the case that it is not the Speaker’s responsibility to ensure that the answer to a written question satisfies that question.

“This is further supported by O’Brien and Bosc on page 522....”

I would just quote for you from page 522 in O’Brien and Bosc’s *House of Commons Practice and Procedure*:

“There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions. Nonetheless, on several occasions, members have raised questions of privilege in the House regarding the accuracy of information contained in responses to written questions; in none of these cases was the matter found to be a *prima facie* breach of privilege. The Speaker has ruled that it is not the role of the Chair to determine whether or not the contents of documents tabled in the House are accurate nor to ‘assess the likelihood of an hon. member knowing whether the facts contained in a document are correct.’”

In this case, the member for Newmarket–Aurora has indicated not that he is questioning the validity of the answers; it’s just that he doesn’t like the answers. And that, in fact, is even more far removed from the rules that we have in place and which you have already ruled upon in your decision of May 18, 2010. So I would argue that there is, in fact, in this case, no point of order nor a point of privilege.

Mr. Peter Kormos: If I may speak briefly in support of the matter raised. The government House leader cites the standing order, 99(d), quite accurately: “The minister shall answer such written questions....” It’s not discretionary. It doesn’t say “may” answer; it says “shall” answer. And the word is “answer.” The clear inference to

be drawn is that the answer has to be responsive to the question.

What the member has told this House, by virtue of reading the questions that he put and the responses that were given, is that these are clearly not answers. One can agree with the proposition that the Speaker has no discretion or jurisdiction to rule on whether or not a member is happy with the answer, but surely there has to be an answer. The responses that were read by the member are not answers.

I would also refer all of us to standing order 1, and in particular to 1(b): "The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members ... (iii) to hold the government accountable for its policies."

Clearly, the provision providing for written questions and the fact that it provides for a significant period of time in which the ministry can prepare the answer is so that there can be more detailed answers. I think it's clear that what the member got was boilerplate that wasn't even close—never mind the bull's eye; it didn't even hit the target. So I appreciate the government House leader's comments, but I think she makes the member's point for him.

"The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sessional days": Any person reading or hearing the responses—nobody is suggesting that the ministry didn't respond, but nobody reading or hearing the responses would ever, by any stretch of the imagination, identify them as answers. The ministry could respond, "Dogs have fur and chickens have feathers," and the government House leader would have us believe that that somehow is an answer. Clearly, it's not. The ministry's response could be that the winning lotto numbers last night were 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. That's a response, but it's clearly not an answer.

The obligation to answer is mandatory. I suggest to you, sir, that the word "answer" has to be given its everyday meaning, as well as, for that matter, its dictionary meaning, and an answer has to be to the question. It's not a response; it's an answer.

I suggest also that the Speaker should consider this in the context of standing order 1, effectively the preamble to our standing orders and a preamble—I know that there are mixed views on this—that I submit has to guide all of us in the interpretation of the standing orders.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: While I'm sure we've enjoyed yet another speech by the member from Welland on a point of order, I don't think he contributed anything to this debate. In fact, the answer was given to the questions. The member received written answers in a timely manner. I listened to his excerpts and I think the answer, specifically to the third part, was in response to his question. We heard excerpts from his requests and excerpts from answers. The answers were given, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I would just indicate—as you have indicated to the House in the past, particularly in May 2010, just this year—that it is not within your purview to rule on whether or not a member is content with the response,

but that they have in fact received a response to their questions in this case.

Mr. Frank Klees: Not to prolong this discussion, but I do want to thank my colleague from Welland, who I believe was very helpful in clarifying. To the House leader I would simply add this to the discussion: I think, out of respect for members of this House, who have legitimate, detailed questions for the ministers, for the government to insist that what I was presented with was in fact a legitimate answer simply underscores the lack of respect for members in this House.

Yes, I got a response, but as my colleague from Welland so clearly said, there is a difference between a response and an answer. None of the responses that I received were an answer to my specific question. I raise this on that basis and, further, in terms—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: If the House leader would allow me to speak rather than interjecting, which shows a further disrespect not only for me but for what is going on, I would appreciate it.

We're speaking to the respect that individual members in this House should have from ministers of the crown and from everyone here. I'm simply saying that I'm desperately trying to do my job as a member of the Legislature, and the kind of responses that I'm getting from ministries here, and now from the House leader of the government, shows absolute disrespect.

Speaker, I ask you to at least do your part to support the work that we have to do here as members of this Legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for raising the point of order, the honourable member from Welland, and the government House leader as well.

I want to take an opportunity to contemplate my thoughts on the points that have been raised, notwithstanding the fact that the Speaker has ruled in the past, and previous Speakers have ruled. I do want to provide the honourable member with a good answer, and I'm going to reserve my decision at this time.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure for me to be able to introduce one of my very closest friends and one of the people who's actually responsible for sending me to this place, Maureen Tourangeau. She's up there right now with MPP Yasir Naqvi.

Before I came to this place, I did work with the Ottawa cancer society in communications, and Maria Redpath, whom I used to work with, is also here. They're joined today by the new president. It's really great to have them here. I'm sure Mr. Yasir Naqvi, as well as the

other Ottawa members, regardless of political stripe, is happy that they're here today.

In addition, I do have another introduction: Today Ottawa realtors are here, and I know that I join my colleagues from all political parties and certainly from the city of Ottawa to welcome them. Today we have Rick Snell, Linda McCallum, Pat Verge, Alison Larabie-Chase, Subhir Uppal, Tim Lee, Peter Sardelis and Matthew Thornton in the chamber to join me as I introduce a bill targeting grow ops that will help Ontario realtors and homeowners.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I can say on behalf of all members that we thank you for your assistance in sending the member from Nepean–Carleton to Queen's Park.

As the members know, today there's going to be a tribute held for former member John Yaremko. There are a number of guests and family members who are joining us here today. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery. On behalf of all members, I would like to welcome Rosalie Yaremko, Anne Holota, Lucy Migus, Jeanette Cooke, Hélène Yaremko-Jarvis, Gary Jarvis, Yvan Baker, Oksana Rewa, Rosalia Sametz, Gloria Chewchuk, Katherine Chewchuk, Katherine Sametz, Walter Chewchuk, His Eminence Yuriy Kalistchuk, the Most Reverend Stephen Chmilar, the Right Reverend Bohdan Sencio, Marc Shwec, Mary Szkambara, Borys Wrzesnewskyj, Walentina Rodak, Olya Sheweli, Taras Pidzamecky, Walentina Kuryliw, Peter Kardasz, James Temerty, Paul Strathdee, Victor Krisel, Eugene Yakovitch, Lidia Smilka, Yuriy Kus, Lesia Panko, Les Salnick, Myroslava Oleksiuk, George Serhijczuk and Reverend Roman Pankiw. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Of course we'd like to welcome the Honourable Borys Wrzesnewskyj, the member from Etobicoke from the federal House, as well today, too. Welcome.

Thanks for the test on my pronunciation of Ukrainian names from a good Ukrainian Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION CENTRE

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize an agency that has been doing great work in Brockville for the past 25 years to connect people to the workforce. On Friday, November 12, I had the privilege of attending the silver anniversary of the Employment and Education Centre, which, under the leadership of Executive Director Sherri Simzer now boasts a staff of 26 and helps 3,000 people a year. That's remarkable growth for the agency Simzer started from scratch. She worked alone for much of that first year in 1985, helped 380 people and hasn't stopped since.

The EEC's constant evolution from its initial focus on helping young people under 24 get the training and confidence they needed to find meaningful work is a

testament to Simzer's vision. She saw when the employment situation in the Brockville area was changing and adapted her agency to ensure it was prepared. Today people of all ages come through the doors and are able to get help, whether it's a 50-year-old laid-off worker facing an uncertain future or an underemployed person desperate for a job that unlocks their full potential.

On behalf of the thousands of workers in my community living brighter lives thanks to these programs and as a founding board member, I offer my sincere congratulations to Sherri and her team.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Bill Mauro: In 2003, all three leaders of all three political parties committed to closing coal-fired generation in Ontario. Of the five coal plants in the province, two are in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

In August of this year, I was very pleased to announce that the Atikokan coal plant will remain a viable asset and be converted to biomass energy production. Just yesterday, I was very happy to announce that the Thunder Bay generating station will also remain open and be converted to natural gas.

The conversion of Atikokan and Thunder Bay generating stations will mean hundreds of construction jobs over the next two to three years. It will save the jobs of current plant employees and save the taxes paid by those plants to their host municipalities. In Atikokan's case, the plant represents roughly 40% of their total municipal tax revenue. Also, with regard to the Atikokan plant, the potential exists for the emergence of a new wood products industry to fuel the plant—an industry that could create even further employment.

As I mentioned, all parties committed to closing coal but not all parties committed to converting the plants in my riding. They might have simply closed the plants. That would have meant no resulting construction work for our building trades unions, the current plant employees could have lost their jobs, and the municipal tax revenue from the Thunder Bay and Atikokan plants would simply have disappeared.

The conversion of these plants is helping to keep and create jobs in the northwest. I want to thank the OPG management and the new plant manager, Chris Fralick, Gary Shchepanik of the Power Workers' Union, and all the building trade union reps that were with me yesterday at the announcement. It was a very—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

WALTER BAKER

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am thrilled to be delivering this tribute to Walter Baker while my friend Maureen Tourangeau is here; she was a big supporter of his. My colleague Norm Sterling worked with him when they were both members for what at the time would have been Carleton–Grenville, and my colleague behind me from Leeds–Grenville would have also remembered the great service of Walter Baker, who was the former government

House leader and minister of revenue for Joe Clark's government.

He also served our community, which would later become Nepean-Carleton, so well that people still tear up when they think of him and the great community man that he was. In fact, our mutual friend, Cathy Boswell, will often tear up when she talks about the great contributions of this man.

A friend of mine, Wendy Fuller, who is about the same age as me, has a picture of Walter Baker and a note he sent to her framed in her house to show her children what a great man this was. My own assistant, Helen Byers, who, by the way, is 70 years old, would often say, "There was a great man in Walter Baker."

Why am I bringing him to the chamber today? Well, 27 years ago he passed from cancer; three years before that, one of the greatest institutions in Barrhaven, which I represent, the Walter Baker centre, was built and named in honour of this great, great Canadian.

I felt it was fitting today, as we've got representatives from the Ottawa cancer society here, as well as my colleagues, who I know Walter Baker touched, to say thank you to a man who I never met, but I was fortunate to become, later in life, very good friends with his own daughter, Nancy Baker.

I think everyone in this place aspires to the type of legend that Walter Baker was. For those of you at home and in this chamber today, I urge you to read up on Walter Baker or even former members in your community, whether it is federal or provincial, to see the type of legacy that they leave on these places.

ORNGE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: During constituency week, on November 8, 2010, I had the opportunity to tour the main operating facility of Ornge, located in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. Ornge is a state-of-the-art facility with cutting-edge technologies used to monitor and track patient transports across the province of Ontario.

In July 2005, Ontario announced the establishment of a new organization to coordinate all the aspects of Ontario's air ambulance systems. After five years, Ornge is now a recognized leader in transport medicine. It is one of the largest and most sophisticated air ambulance programs in the world. Last year, Ornge provided sophisticated medical support to over 20,000 Ontarians across the province.

I'm proud to acknowledge the work the staff of Ornge do every day, and I'm very excited to have learned about this organization.

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FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. John O'Toole: Today, two of Ontario's top high school football teams are set to square off at the Metro Bowl. For high school football, the Metro Bowl is the game to end all games—the Super Bowl, the Grey Cup.

Tonight, at the Rogers Centre, the Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School Titans from Courtice in my riding face off against the King City Secondary School Lions for the Toronto region championship. The game promises to be high-scoring and fast-paced, with a lot of talent.

In their semi-final matches, the Titans downed the Upper Canada College Blues 25-16 with a powerful performance from star player Earl Anderson, who had over 200 yards of offence in that game, and I hope he has more tonight.

The Lions likewise took down the Richview Saints 55-23 in their semi-final match.

I want to congratulate head coach Fred Zinkie and coach Rob Geary, a friend of my daughter who's a teacher as well, for all their hard work in guiding our team this far. Your leadership has been a strong force behind the success of the Titans team.

To the Titans, I say: Play hard, enjoy the challenge and know that your community, your school, Holy Trinity, Courtice, Clarington and Durham region are all behind you. Best wishes and congratulations. Well done.

LOIS HARTE-MAXWELL

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about a woman from my community whom I've known for many years. Ms. Lois Harte-Maxwell recently attended a ribbon-cutting at Peterborough city hall. This ribbon-cutting ceremony was a dedication of a new accessibility ramp located at the front entrance of city hall. This public recognition of her commitment to assist those faced with the daily challenges of living with a disability is well deserved. She's been advocating for the rights of the disabled for over 40 years and is a founding member of the Peterborough Council for Persons with Disabilities.

Ms. Harte-Maxwell's hard work in this area has received provincial recognition. She is a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for outstanding contributions to her community. While on city council, she was appointed to the Peterborough Senior Citizens Council, Fairhaven Home for Seniors, the Peterborough Social Planning Council, the Peterborough Civic Hospital board of governors and the mayor's committee on affordable housing, to name a few.

Ms. Lois Harte-Maxwell was an excellent city councillor. I served with her on city council from 1985 to 1993. I had the great honour of sitting beside her for many years during her time on council. She fell victim to polio at a young age but in spite of her disability has achieved more than most of us will ever achieve in our lifetimes. She truly sets an example for all of us to follow.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Ontario's long-term energy plan is multi-faceted. It addresses the use of several energy sources, such as solar, nuclear and wind. A major component of this plan is the conservation of Ontario's energy.

Through time-of-use pricing, the McGuinty government will be making energy more affordable for Ontario families by expanding the times in which power is sold at its cheapest rate. Power will now be cheapest for Ontarians to use from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., which is an expansion of two hours, as it was previously 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.

While the opposition is now against time-of-use, they used to champion this very same policy approach. Former Energy Minister John Baird said in this House, and I quote, "If we could get everyone in the province to turn their dishwasher on in off-peak hours and do their washing in off-peak hours, that would have a huge consequence"—and we agree.

Making power affordable for Ontario families is a vital component in our plan to create a clean and reliable system of power, and we are committed to time-of-use pricing.

The adjustment of peak hours announced in the long-term energy plan will help make life easier for Ontario families by cutting costs and providing 10 additional hours per week under the lowest time-of-use rate.

In the long run, lower peak demand will mean the province needs to build less new generation to serve that peak, lowering costs for all Ontarians.

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to say a big thank you to the Canadian Cancer Society for their fight against cancer. Today, the society hosted a very successful breakfast right here at Queen's Park. They even had people from Nickel Belt and all over the northeast in attendance.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Even Nickel Belt?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Even Nickel Belt. I don't get very many visitors.

Through much hard work and dedication, the Canadian Cancer Society has become a smart, professional, effective advocacy organization, and they do their work with empathy—not an easy task, but certainly one of the reasons why I hold them in such great esteem.

Every three minutes, a Canadian is diagnosed with cancer. This is clearly unacceptable. We can and we must do better.

Today the cancer society wanted action on indoor tanning. I could not agree more. I'm so proud of the five medical officers of health in the north for their support and for the letters they have written. I'm proud of the thousands of youth throughout the north who have signed postcards asking for just that, and the thousands more who have signed petitions, and all the youth groups of the cancer society who are working diligently together to ask the government to ban the use of artificial tanning equipment by youths under the age of 18.

The refusal of our health promotion minister to move forward on banning indoor tanning leaves me scratching my head in disbelief.

To the 65,000 volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society, thank you for your fight.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Nuclear power has been a reliable, safe supplier of affordable baseload generation for Ontario families for over 40 years. The Pickering nuclear generating station has been an integral part of that fleet.

Nuclear has been an important component of Ontario's energy mix, accounting for about 50% of the electricity generated in Ontario during recent years. In addition to providing consistent supply at stable prices, nuclear energy does not produce any primary air pollution or release greenhouse gases.

That's why the McGuinty government, through our long-term energy plan, is committed to keeping nuclear energy as the main component of our supply mix. In fact, Ontario will partner with industry leaders to renew and refurbish existing nuclear facilities as well as to invest in new nuclear generation.

Over the first 10 to 15 years of our plan, 10,000 megawatts of our existing nuclear capacity will be refurbished. These investments will ensure that our nuclear facilities can continue to provide affordable, reliable electricity for years to come.

Unlike the opposition, we have a plan for Ontario's energy system. During their years in government, they mismanaged the system and doubled our reliance on coal. They allowed supply to diminish by 6% while at the same time demand increased by 8%, making Ontario a net importer of energy.

We in the McGuinty government are committed to keeping the lights on for Ontario families and seniors and not subjecting them to the blackouts that were all too potentially common under the Tories.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's always better, if members have comments that they wish to make to one another across the aisle, that they take them outside the chamber.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Mr. Dunlop from the Standing Committee on Estimates reported the following resolutions:

Resolved, that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011:

Ministry of Government—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Dispense. Agreed? Agreed.

Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on the Ontario disability support program from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This is an extremely important report from the public accounts committee.

Section 3.09 of the 2009 Auditor General's report, which was presented in December of that year, pointed out some significant problems with the ODSP program. This is not a small program. This is a program spending \$3 billion of the taxpayers' money.

The Auditor General pointed out some significant problems with regard to the appeal process if a person is turned down when they apply for an ODSP pension. The auditor found that in one case, one arbitrator rejected every case, and in another case—one arbitrator accepted every case, and one rejected every case.

Eventually, everyone who applies and reapplies gets ODSP, whether or not they are a worthy applicant. There are significant problems with this program.

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The committee has made a number of recommendations. There's over \$663 million owing from people who have received payments who should not have received payments. Those are identified payments; perhaps it's much higher than that. I would ask that the minister take the recommendations with regard to the ODSP program very, very seriously. We could perhaps increase the benefits of legitimate ODSP recipients if we dealt with those who should not be receiving payments.

This program is in bad need of a significant look-at. The Auditor General made some significant comments and criticisms with regard to how it's being run. The administration of this program has to be cleaned up.

With that, I would adjourn the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CLANDESTINE DRUG OPERATION PREVENTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DES OPÉRATIONS DE STUPÉFIANTS CLANDESTINES

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts to prevent clandestine drug operations / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant diverses lois afin de prévenir les opérations de stupéfiants clandestines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to have here today representatives from the Ontario Real Estate Association, who have been calling for something to happen on grow ops for quite some time.

This bill amends a number of acts with respect to clandestine drug operations, also known as grow ops, which are defined to be illegal operations where any substance listed in the schedules I through IV to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act of Canada can be obtained by any method or process.

It's a long explanatory note, so I'll shorten that for you. At present, under section 15.9 of the Building Code Act, 1992, an inspector can enter upon land at any reasonable time without a warrant for the purpose of the inspection of a building to determine whether it is unsafe. This bill will clarify that a building is unsafe if an inspector determines that it contains a clandestine drug operation.

The bill also amends the Municipal Act, 2001, to broaden the obligation of a local municipality or an upper-tier municipality to conduct an inspection of a building location on land in its jurisdiction when notified by the police force or local municipality, respectively.

Furthermore, the bill also amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, to assist a landlord, on giving at least 24 hours notice, to enter a rental unit to determine if it contains a clandestine drug operation.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following change be made to the ballot list for private member's public business: Mr. Murdoch and Mr. Clark exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Clark assumes ballot item 57, and Mr. Murdoch assumes ballot item 78; and that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 57.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

JOHN YAREMKO

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Mr. John Yaremko.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute honour and a privilege to stand and speak about this amazing man and member of this assembly, the first MPP of Ukrainian descent to be elected in the year 1951.

I'm going to start by just going over a bit of the facts of his life as told to us by the *Globe* and the *Star*. John Yaremko, who died at 91, was the man credited with the term "multiculturalism." That in itself is an astounding fact. One would have thought that multiculturalism has been there—been in the air—but he was the one who first used it. It has since spawned a number of doctoral dissertations and has been part of the lexicon of Canadian coinage.

He was born in Welland—I have a friend sitting in front of me here who is the current MPP for Welland. He was born to an immigrant family and became a Hamilton Municipal Boys Council alderman at the age of 14. Image that. He used scholarships and jobs in steel plants and on farms to pay his way through the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall Law School. He was not, as we say, to the manor born. This was a man who worked his way up the hard way.

He was elected, as I said, in 1951 and entered the public service in 1953 as a Queen's Counsel, one of the youngest to that distinguished order as well. He served under Premiers Leslie Frost, John Robarts and Bill Davis, and held a long list of portfolios including transport, citizenship, public welfare, and social and family services. He was Ontario's first Solicitor General.

He also, of course, was very aware of where he came from. He helped install a plaque in the Ontario Legislature commemorating Ukrainian immigrants. Four years later, he travelled to Austria to meet Hungarian refugees before returning to Canada to push for an expedited immigration program. Decades later, this same man became one of the first to push the federal government into recognizing an independent Ukraine.

These are some of the awards he received: He was awarded the Order of St. Andrew; he was awarded the President's Medal in Ukraine; in 2009, he received the Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism. He also was given recognition for support of his alma mater; in his memory, the John Yaremko Chair of Ukrainian Studies was established at the University of Toronto. He also received the Queen Elizabeth Coronation Medal and the Confederation of Canada Medal. This was an exemplary individual in terms of his accomplishments; there's no doubt about that.

I'd like to take a few minutes also to recognize, to honour and to celebrate the spirit of this amazing and remarkable individual. I want to welcome his family; we're honoured that you're here. I want to also welcome those friends of mine from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and other Ukrainian organizations and, of course, some of our eminent guests who are sitting in the Speaker's gallery. Thank you for coming. It shows your concern. You're welcome, and thank you for sharing him with us all those years ago for all those years, because he

served for 24 of them, from 1951 right until 1975. We just found out that it was in the riding of Bellwoods. Riding names have changed, of course, but I like to think that part of the old Bellwoods riding was a little piece of Parkdale–High Park, the centre for much of Ukrainian immigration in those early years.

This was a man who came into an Ontario that was very different from the Ontario we know today and into a Canada very different from the Canada we know today. It was a racist province; there's no other way of saying it. Certainly I know, from the stories my family told me about how Italians were welcomed—or not welcomed—in the province. I know what it was like to be a foreigner and to have a foreign last name—that's how they would have termed it in those days—and to be a Roman Catholic in a distinctly anti-Catholic environment where Roman Catholics were not hired for certain jobs, where people with last names that weren't WASP last names were not hired for certain jobs and employers got away with it routinely. They weren't given housing because of their last names and because of their religion. That's the Ontario he walked into. That's the Canada he came to and helped change. He did that. He helped change the very landscape of this province and this Canada by his very presence.

He would have come, of course, from sorrow as well. For somebody who was elected in 1951, one can imagine that part of his family lived through the Holodomor in Ukraine. Part of them lived through the Stalinist genocide famine that lasted and claimed 10 million lives. We know he probably came from a horrific background, or his family did, and yet he achieved all that he achieved through sheer spirit, through sheer will. I like to think that in part in his honour and in his memory, we passed an all-party bill here recognizing November 15 as the day we commemorate the Holodomor as what it was: a genocide, a famine. Frank Klees, who is the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Dave Levac from Brant, and myself were all honoured to co-author that bill. That bill would never have happened were it not for people like John Yaremko.

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So, welcome. I look forward to seeing you after and getting to know you better, those of you who are his family. Certainly everyone here wants to thank you for being part of this amazing, remarkable man's life, for gifting him to our province and to our country. We have never been the same because of men like John Yaremko.

Vichnaya pamiat—always remembered.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise to honour Mr. Yaremko.

For those of us who are elected members of the Legislature, for those of us who have gathered here in the gallery from the Ukrainian Canadian community, and for all Ontarians, today is indeed a very special day, for today we pay tribute to John Yaremko, a great leader, a community member, a benefactor and, most importantly, a gentleman.

As MPPs we dream of making a difference, of building a better Ontario where every person can realize their

potential. Today we remember a person who, from his own humble beginnings, realized his potential and then dedicated his life to helping others realize theirs.

On behalf of the government, I would like to welcome our very special guests in the gallery. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Yaremko's family for being with us, as well as the leaders of Canada's Ukrainian community. Your presence is very appreciated.

John's life was an inspiration, from those humble beginnings to ultimately becoming one of Ontario's most respected public servants. As we heard, he was born in Welland in 1918 to George and Mary Yaremko. They had emigrated from the Ukraine to build a better life. Back then, remember, Ontario did not provide all that free access to good education that we have today. So through hard work in summer months and nights at the farm, he actually succeeded. He won scholarships, he was valedictorian, he attended the University of Toronto, he was a gold medallist, and ultimately he was called to the bar in 1944.

His achievements were impressive. He persevered and gained a level of success that would be the envy of most Canadians today. However, the struggles he and his family endured would become his greatest motivation to serve others, to provide others with those same opportunities for success.

In 1951, he was elected, as you heard, member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Bellwoods, the first Canadian of Ukrainian ancestry to be elected to the Ontario Legislature, and had a distinguished career in 10 portfolios. But what was most important to me was that he was also Minister of Transportation, and I was Minister of Transportation. I remember when I was put into the portfolio, the first thing he said to me was, "About bloody time they got a woman"—that was great—and the second was he then asked me about the conditions of the roads and what I was going to do about some of them. The best part was, I didn't even think he'd care anymore after all those years he'd put so much public service in; he still did. And every time we met, he had some good advice for me and he also asked some pretty pointed questions about what I was or was not planning to do.

He championed human rights. He championed the rights of the disabled, the poor and ethnic minorities, and his contributions were numerous. He sought to bridge the gap between government and new Canadians. He believed that Canada could be a place where people with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds could live together in harmony, a way of life that is now distinctly Canadian. He was one of the earliest champions of multiculturalism. He not only advocated for multiculturalism, he actually made it a reality. He worked to ensure that all ethnocultural groups had access to government—and not just government, but especially to the judiciary. He encouraged all ethnic communities to become involved—because, remember, back in the 1950s and 1960s, governments weren't that open and that transparent and there was not a whole lot of involvement of the constituencies

in government. He encouraged that. He believed government should be not only open, but inclusive.

He also believed that the diverse cultures enriched our society, and through his initiatives, heritage languages started with John and today they are taught in Ontario and in our schools.

He was a passionate person, so even when the issues were not his immediate issues, he got involved. You heard about the Hungarian Revolution. The people revolted, and John got involved; he went back to Ottawa and said, "Not only should Canada do something, Canada must do something," and ultimately 40,000 Hungarians came to Canada.

But he had his critics as well. I think the *Globe* and *Mail* accused him of "pandering blatantly to the ethnic groups from which he drew much of his support," and that he was "wholly unconcerned about justice." He wrote that off because he knew that to those Hungarian families who settled in Canada, he was a hero, because he had defended their freedom.

You've heard about the numerous medals that he received over his life, but in particular, virtually every ethnic professional association acknowledged his tributes: Italian, Latvian, Ukrainian, Acadian, Polish. He was Indian Chief Bright Sky and Indian Light in a Bottle as well.

He really had a span that went across all of Ontario. He loved his community. You heard about his roots. He was there in 1952 and, 40 years later, he was there at the same plaque speaking passionately about his community. It continued right through to Ukrainian independence. He was so determined that we would be the first country that would recognize Ukraine's independence—he strove for that and he got it. Ultimately, the federal government agreed, and Canada would become the first Western nation to recognize it.

He continued things after political life, and there were so many. He was a philanthropist. He gave; he established chairs. He did so much. But I want to say that, at the end, his most important legacy was his generosity and his public service. To all of us here today and to countless other Ontarians, he inspired everyone he met to public service. There is no plaque out there for this particular accomplishment, but there is a plaque in all of us: It's our love and devotion to not only an outstanding human being, but also to an extraordinarily fine gentleman. He has our eternal gratitude.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I welcome the many friends and family of John Yaremko to the Ontario Parliament here today. I'm honoured and pleased to be invited to pay tribute to a great man on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Progressive Conservative caucus.

Not only was John Yaremko a great Ontarian, he was also a legend in the Ukrainian Canadian community. My mother and father were not political people, but conversations in our home often referred to John and his success as an MPP and minister of the crown.

Coincidentally, guidance from my parents resulted in my attending, like John Yaremko, the University of To-

ronto, Osgoode Hall Law School, and later being elected to the Ontario Parliament. I'm just one of the thousands of young people who found inspiration in John's career and his service to our community and democracy.

Today, we remember John Yaremko for his many contributions to his country, as an advocate and supporter of multiculturalism, and as a man dedicated to improving the lives of seniors, the disabled and cultural minorities.

John Yaremko was born in Welland, Ontario, in 1918, the oldest son of Mary and George Yaremko. He entered politics at the age of 14 when he became boy alderman in the city of Hamilton. He served on the social services committee, a position that allowed him to begin to fulfill his personal interest in bettering the lives of his fellow Canadians.

John graduated from high school with more scholarships than he was able to use in his eight years at the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall. Summers were spent working on local farms and at the Stelco steel plant.

In 1945, he married Mary Materyn, a registered nurse from Montreal, who he met at the Ukrainian Orthodox church.

In 1951, John became the first Ontario MPP of Ukrainian descent elected to Queen's Park. He spent 25 years here at the Ontario Legislature. He helped shape our province through his service in no less than seven provincial ministries, and he is remembered as a strong advocate for education, human rights and multiculturalism.

1540

Upon his departure from politics, John continued to support causes close to his heart. He was a founding member of the University of Toronto Chair of Ukrainian Studies Foundation. John supported the establishment of the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary intern program for university students from the Ukraine in the House of Commons and the Ontario Legislature. He was supportive of many community initiatives, including the John Yaremko Centre for Community Living, one of the foremost residential facilities for persons with physical disabilities in North America.

John's niece Hélène Yaremko-Jarvis shared some memories with me, and I quote from her: "Uncle John's successful political career was a beacon of light to all ethnic minorities. During my legal career, I have repeatedly encountered lawyers of different ethnic backgrounds who have said they met Uncle John when he was attending a ribbon-cutting or other ceremony at their cultural centres. He appears to have been kept extremely busy by those various groups, as they saw in his success a possibility of their own success."

In 2009, John was named the first recipient of the Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The award recognizes individuals who have achieved excellence in promoting multiculturalism so that all citizens can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging in Canada. I could not think of a more deserving recipient of such a high honour.

John's contributions to the community and the recognition he received for his accomplishments are unprecedented. For me, John was much more than a Canadian of Ukrainian descent; he was also a family friend. I recall as a young man my family knocking on doors during John's election campaigns. Each year, without fail, he sent Valentine's Day cards to my mom and sister, and he even took the time to attend my graduation party from Osgoode Hall Law School way back in 1962.

Today, we remember and pay tribute to a great man, friend and relative who left his mark on our community and our country: Mr. John Yaremko.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to thank all the honourable members and thank the family and friends who are here today. As a Ukrainian Canadian standing here and sitting here in the Speaker's chair, it makes me really proud of what John Yaremko did, and, in my own case, of my grandfather. Dealing with that racism in 1937 in Toronto and going from Dymtro Pidwerbeski to Dick Peters—that was racism.

For all of us, it's a great moment. He was a pioneer, and you look at what he did and how it has changed the face of this chamber. This chamber was a much different place in 1951 and it was a pioneer like John Yaremko who made that happen. It's something that we all need to be proud of, no matter what country we come from and what our origin is.

I would like to say to the family and friends, thank you for being here. Copies of the Hansard and a video of today's proceedings will be provided to you. I would also like to invite all of you and all members as well: There is a reception that is going to be held in the caucus room of the official opposition. First, a photograph will be taken on the grand staircase.

On behalf of all members, we thank you, and we want to thank you for sharing John Yaremko with all of us.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I will give this to page Vithuran. I'm in complete agreement.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition here, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax."

I affix my signature to that petition.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale. I want to thank Steelers Restaurant and Focus Elmvale for sending the petition to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians," including the people of Elmvale.

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Dowling and Levack, which are in Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Vithuran to bring it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition provided to me by Dorothy Duncan, a great champion of Ontario's heritage, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

1550

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm presenting a petition on behalf of the Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water regarding the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine, which reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to Joshua, the page from my riding of Durham.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have yet another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

This is from people from the London-Kitchener area.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition entitled "Keep Ontario dollars for Ontario students."

"This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families are struggling to help put their kids through university;

"Whereas students in Ontario graduate with an average of \$26,000 in debt and have the highest tuition and largest class sizes in the country; and

"Whereas Ontario tax dollars should be kept in Ontario to help Ontario students, not sent overseas;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the McGuinty gov-

ernment to cancel its plan to give foreign students scholarships of \$40,000 a year and reinvest these funds in scholarships for Ontario students."

I agree with the petition and will sign it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Kingston.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Casey to deliver it to the Clerk.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have hundreds more petitions in support of paved shoulders on provincial highways, and they read:

"Petition in Support of Bill 100....

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I support this.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This time I have similar petitions from the Brampton-Mississauga area. They read:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I have signed that petition and am sending it down with Miguel.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I want to thank the corporation of the town of New Tecumseth town council for sending that petition to me.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas people need teeth to stay healthy; and

"Whereas a lack of universal dental care has resulted in an epidemic of poor dental health, and many people are living and working with no teeth; and

"Whereas there is only very limited support for denture care for those on social assistance and no support at all for the working poor;

"Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly to increase funding to assist people on social assistance and the working poor to access denture care."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Alexandra to bring it to the Clerk.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition from the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communication skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow

or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment," and funding.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Joshua for the second petition of the day.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet another petition, this time from people from the Windsor area, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I give this to Sarah.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition from people in the Owen Sound, Thornbury and Meaford area:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I agree with that petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got the last one. This time, it's from people from the Ottawa area and it reads as follows: "We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I give this to Alexandra.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND
MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE
AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES
ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Mr. Phillips, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: As usual, I'll be sharing the vast majority of my time with the very capable member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I thank the deputy House leader for his wonderful sharing of his time. You hit the important points; I thank you for that.

I'm pleased to stand today in the House for second reading of the 2010 fall budget bill, the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010.

This government was elected to bring change to the province of Ontario—and this change from previous years of neglect of public services, neglect of infrastructure, that our families and our economy rely on. Ontarians have been working together over the past seven years to repair the past neglect and to rebuild the province. Since 2003, Ontario's schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, roads and bridges have all been significantly improved.

The McGuinty government has also modernized our tax system and made major investments to ensure that the people of Ontario have clean, modern, reliable electricity systems.

As a result of these changes we've made, our economy has created 426,100 net new jobs. We have recovered 75% of the jobs lost in the recession, compared to only 10% in the United States. That really bears repeating: We have recovered 75% of the jobs lost in the recession, compared to only 10% in the United States. And nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers are now paying less income tax.

This government has worked to improve the lives of the people of Ontario. We have reduced wait times for key surgical procedures and reduced primary class sizes. We've implemented full-day kindergarten, and 36%

more students are attending colleges or universities since we took office.

Unfortunately, Ontario was hit very hard by the global recession. Despite our economy having emerged from the downturn, Ontario families are still feeling pinched financially. The reality is that many are anxious and uncertain about their ability to make ends meet. That's why our government is providing Ontarians with significant refundable tax credits. They're the most effective way to help those who need it the most. These include the children's activity tax credit, which was passed unanimously by this Legislature just last week, and of course the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which also was passed unanimously in this Legislature just yesterday.

Bill 135, if passed, would provide Ontarians with significant relief on electricity costs through the new Ontario clean energy benefit. The Ontario clean energy benefit, or the OCEB, would give residential farm and small business consumers a 10% credit on their electricity bills for the next five years. This credit would help more than four million Ontario households and more than 400,000 hard-working small business owners, farms and other small users manage their rising electricity prices. The OCEB would be effective January 1, 2011. Due to the length of time that's required to amend bills, however, the price adjustments would not appear immediately. The benefit would appear on electricity bills no later than May 2011 and, of course, would be retroactive to January 1, 2011. The OCEB would apply each and every month for the next five years. The estimated cost of the proposed OCEB is \$300 million in 2010-11, with an estimated full-year cost of \$1.1 billion next year.

In anticipation of questions about how we would pay for this benefit, let me assure you that the costs of the OCEB are accommodated within the fiscal plan as a result of our government's prudent approach to managing Ontario's finances. The province's revenues from ownership of Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One are projected to be approximately the same as the cost of the OCEB. Providing the 10% OCEB to Ontarians is a responsible way of helping Ontario families through the transition to a cleaner electricity system.

Since taking office, our government has made the long-overdue investments in electricity—in the system infrastructure, of course—that were needed to make sure that the lights stay on. We're creating a clean, modern, reliable energy system that's attracting investment and is also creating jobs.

The Progressive Conservative government made little investment in either electricity supply or transmission infrastructure. By 2003, Ontarians did not even know if the lights would stay on. Their reliance on five coal plants meant that about 25% of our electricity came from dirty coal.

They had no plan for conservation and no plan for supply to keep up with demand. The electricity system lost 1,800 megawatts of power capacity. It's hard to imagine how much 1,800 megawatts of capacity is, and so if you were to imagine Niagara Falls running dry, that's the equivalent to 1,800 megawatts.

A brief experiment in market deregulation in 2002 saw spot market energy prices spike an average of 30% in seven months, prompting the Progressive Conservative government to freeze rates at an artificially low level.

Our government is phasing out coal-fired generation and replacing it with cleaner generation, which is improving the quality of the air we breathe and reducing health care costs. Interestingly enough, Speaker, shutting down coal generation is equivalent to taking how many cars off the road, do you think? Seven million. Outstanding. Closing coal-fired generation is equivalent to taking seven million cars off the road.

I want to share a quote from Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. He has this to say: "Ontario's doctors are delighted by the proposal to speed up the coal phase-out. This will be the largest single greenhouse gas reduction project in North America and a major contribution to respiratory health."

Since 2003, more than 8,000 megawatts of new clean power have come online, making up more than 20% of current capacity. Hydro One has invested \$7 billion to improve 5,000 kilometres of its transmission and distribution lines.

In order to have a clean, modern, reliable system, we need to continue to invest in Ontario's electricity system. While absolutely necessary, these investments are increasing electricity costs.

I want to share one more quote with you at this point. The director of government relations for the IBEW Construction Council of Ontario had this to say: "People that work in the industry know that the infrastructure needs to be renewed. It's going to create some opportunities to get Ontario youth involved in the electrical trade and the power line trade. And it's a great way to ensure that we're going to have a reliable system and job creation. We think it's a win-win for everybody."

1610

After five years, Ontario will have largely completed the transition to a cleaner, more reliable system, and price increases are expected to moderate.

Rising electricity prices are having a significant impact on consumers who are asking for help with the cost of clean, modern energy. That's why we're taking action with our targeted tax credits and other supports and our new proposed Ontario clean energy benefit. If implemented, the OCEB would save a typical household more than \$150 a year, small businesses would save more than \$1,700 a year, and farms would save over \$2,000 per year.

Bill 135 also introduces important amendments to the Securities Act. It would protect consumers and investors through strong financial regulations. Our government is proposing amendments to the Ontario Securities Act that would allow the Ontario Securities Commission, or the OSC, to develop and implement a robust regulatory framework for over-the-counter derivatives, also known as OTC derivatives. These amendments would allow for new rules specifically designed for OTC derivatives. The

amendments would also include derivatives within the scope of existing insider trading offences. The OSC will undertake significant consultations in developing the proposed new OTC derivative rules.

The Ontario government is providing regulatory leadership, promoting fair and efficient capital markets, enhancing investor protection and helping Canada deliver on its international financial reform commitments.

In updating financial regulation, our government is being consistent with the proposed federal Canadian Securities Act and assisting in a seamless transition to the new Canadian securities regulator. Additional proposed amendments to the Ontario Securities Act would also provide for regulatory oversight of credit rating agencies and strengthen the oversight of alternative trading systems.

Bill 135 would enable the province to move ahead with plans to modernize financial regulation by strengthening regulatory requirements, as well as adopting flexible and effective global regulatory measures. These plans would not only help to protect consumers and investors, they would also help to promote Ontario's growing stature as a well-regulated, world-class financial market. This would be a move in the right direction as we look to the future of Ontario's role within Canada and, of course, beyond.

When the global recession occurred, Ontario was hit harder than other provinces through its manufacturing and forestry sectors. Government revenues declined steeply. During the recession, we chose to lessen the impact on the people of Ontario through short-term stimulus investments to help create and, of course, help preserve jobs.

According to a report by the Conference Board of Canada earlier this year, Ontario's increased infrastructure spending preserved about 70,000 jobs in the province in 2009 and added almost a full percentage point to Ontario economic growth during that year.

We also made a decision to protect schools. We made a decision to protect hospitals and other vital public services. As a result, Ontario, like many other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, has a fiscal deficit.

Prior to the global recession, our government had eliminated the \$5.5-billion deficit it inherited from the previous government. We did that ahead of schedule and posted three consecutive balanced budgets. Our government is making progress with reducing the size of the deficit each and every year.

As economies return to growth, governments must return to balance, and our government is doing just that. We have a responsible plan to cut the deficit in half within five years of its highest point and eliminate it by 2017-18.

Last week, my colleague the Honourable Minister of Finance announced that the projected deficit for 2010-11 of \$18.7 billion has been cut by almost 25% compared to the forecast a year ago in 2009-10. This is \$1 billion less than the projected deficit that was announced in the 2010 budget.

This decline in the deficit is thanks to stronger economic growth and thanks to responsible management. We're borrowing \$2 billion less in 2010-11 due to the \$1-billion decline in the projected deficit and the \$1-billion payment to the province from the proposed Teranet agreement. Reducing borrowing needs lowers interest costs, of course, which creates more fiscal room.

Our government is committed to maximizing the value of government-owned assets, while at the same time protecting consumers. Our proposed agreement with Teranet Inc. would retain provincial oversight of the electronic land registration system, including fees. Teranet, which is owned by Borealis, was formed in 1991 as a partnership between Ontario and the private sector to create an electronic land registration system. This involved moving from a 200-year-old paper-based system to create an electronic database with records for more than five million parcels of land. The first electronic transaction took place in 1999. The system now has registration volumes of more than two million annually.

Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world to provide electronic registration of land-related documents. Electronic land registration enhances security, improves the accuracy and integrity of the database and provides an electronic audit trail.

Since Teranet's creation, the province has been involved in a number of Teranet transactions. These include the previous government's sale of its 50% interest in Teranet in August 2003. Under existing agreements, Teranet has the exclusive right until 2017 to operate Ontario's electronic land registration system.

Our government has negotiated the principal terms of a proposed agreement to renew its long-standing business partnership with Teranet by renewing for an additional 50 years Teranet's exclusive licences to provide electronic land registration and what are called writ services in Ontario. Writ services allow the electronic search of writs of execution that encumber any interest in land by a debtor who owes money to another person under a court order or under any other statutory authority.

Under the proposed agreement, Borealis would provide the province with an upfront payment of \$1 billion, which would be used to reduce the province's debt. Reducing borrowing needs would lower interest costs, which again creates more fiscal room.

Beginning in 2017, the province would also receive annual royalty payments from Teranet, which are expected to be approximately \$50 million in 2017-18 and of course to grow in future years. The proposed agreement is subject to certain final closing conditions and is expected to close in late 2010.

Unlike the Progressive Conservative government's Highway 407 sale, our proposed agreement with Teranet contains significant consumer protection, including provincial control over any increases to fees charged by Teranet for any statutory services.

It would also ensure the province has ongoing participation in Teranet through royalties, and the potential to share in any extraordinary profits that would be

realized by Teranet through a sale or any exceptional performance of the business. The province will also continue its oversight of the electronic land registration system.

The proposed agreement negotiated by our government freezes fees for five years. In 2015, certain fees would be increased to equalize fees for searches done in land registration offices and those also done remotely, and certain fees would be adjusted by 50% of inflation.

Because these adjustments would be based on only 50% of the full rate of inflation, they would decline in real terms over time.

1620

Our 2010 fall economic statement also outlines our ongoing fiscal prudence and expenditure management. We are using taxpayers' money wisely. We reduced government administrative costs from 15% to 12% of overall spending, which is the second best efficiency rate in Canada. Since 2007, we have achieved more than \$800 million in savings per year through streamlining processes, lowering administrative costs, better use of technology and other cost-avoidance and cost-reduction measures. We're on track to reduce the size of the Ontario public service, or the OPS, by 5%, including savings of \$440 million over the next five years from harmonizing the collection of sales tax and corporate tax with the federal government.

Measures we've introduced to restrain compensation in the OPS and broader public sector would help redirect \$2 billion toward sustaining public services over two years, and as a result of the government's approach to compensation, provincial public sector wage settlements have fallen since the 2010 budget to below the averages in the private sector as well as the municipal and federal public sectors. Proposed new rules on the use of lobbyists and consultants would improve accountability within the OPS and, of course, the broader public sector.

We've also reduced the price of most generic drugs listed under the Ontario public drug program by 50% and have delayed and rescope some major capital projects, saving over \$5 billion in borrowing costs over the next five years.

The ongoing comprehensive review announced in the 2010 budget has so far identified over \$260 million in potential savings.

Ontario is emerging from the global recession. Key economic indicators have improved from the lows posted during the recession, although many remain below pre-recession levels. After declining over four consecutive quarters, our real gross domestic product has increased for the last four consecutive quarters. In fact, real GDP has recovered 71% of its recessionary loss. Based on the best available advice, we project that Ontario's GDP growth will be 3.2% in 2010, up from what we forecast in the 2010 budget, and as I mentioned earlier, 75% of the jobs lost during the recession have been recovered. That's over 180,000 net new jobs since May 2009.

However, we are mindful that economic growth is projected to be slower in the coming years, mainly due to

the slow growth in the US economy. In 2011 we expect the real GDP to grow by 2.2%, and in 2012 by 2.5%. As is our practice, our planning assumptions are more conservative than the average private sector forecast.

The Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010, includes significant relief and support for Ontario families and Ontario businesses. It provides new investments that will continue to help grow the economy and will continue to help create jobs. The Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010, would help keep Ontario moving forward. For that, and for all of the reasons outlined, I strongly urge the House to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to comment on the speech from the member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

I guess I'll start off by just commenting about some of the language they use. The government certainly is very creative. I mean, the name of this bill is creative in itself, but they are creative; I will give them that.

She was talking about, and I know the finance minister in his speech in the fall economic statement brought it up, how they had reduced the deficit by 25% since last year's projection: \$18.7 billion is the current prediction for the deficit for this year, compared to a year ago in the fall, when they said that it was going to be \$24.7 billion. Well, that's fine, except that in the budget at the beginning of the year, originally the deficit was going to be \$14 billion. Then it went to \$18 billion in June, then it went to \$24.7 billion, then it came back down to \$21.3 billion just before the end of the fiscal year, which was March 31. When it ended up being \$19.3 billion, there were celebrations going on. I, frankly, am shocked that the Minister of Finance and now the parliamentary assistant have the gall to put that number in as if this is some big savings, predicting \$18.7 billion for this year and talking about it like it's some sort of accomplishment, using the favourite word of the Minister of Finance, which is "prudent," as if increasing spending over 70% is prudent and running a \$20-billion deficit last year and planning on \$18.7 billion this year is being prudent.

I'm running out of time, so I will leave it at that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's called Helping Ontario Families. I'll tell you, families would love some help. I know families across this province from north to south, east to west, all over Ontario and all points in between would love some help, because people are feeling really—how would you say—besieged by this government and its policies.

If you take a look at the latest initiative that happened as of July 1 this year, we woke up on Canada Day, celebrating Canada's birthday, to yet another tax by the Dalton McGuinty government—in this case, in the form of the harmonized sales tax, the dreaded HST. We immediately saw the gas prices go up. We saw our hydro

bills go up. We saw the oil bill go up. We saw everything that we buy when it comes to goods and services go up in the province of Ontario as a result of that particular initiative.

We did not pay any of the taxes that were applied on the HST before in Ontario when it came to services, and certainly now Ontarians are paying more. Helping Ontario Families? Hydro bills: We are seeing from east to west, north to south—it doesn't matter where you live in between—families besieged by the price of electricity. We're seeing hydro bills that have more than doubled over the last seven years. People are feeling—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think the word I'm hearing I would ask the member to withdraw, and to choose his language.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's that?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I may be mishearing it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "Besieged"?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Oh, sorry. I was mishearing it, so you're just fine.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was not saying "deceived"; I was saying "besieged." I said "besieged." Thank you, Speaker, for the clarification.

Helping Ontario Families? Absolutely. People are seeing their hydro bills go through the roof and now the government says, "We have a plan," and they announced it yesterday. We didn't like the old plan. We certainly don't like the new plan. What we need is an NDP plan. Vote often; vote early; vote NDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. I deserved that. I understand.

The member for Durham—excuse me, the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

1630

Mr. Pat Hoy: Thank you, Speaker. I'm still here.

I'm pleased to rise and make comment on the comments made by the parliamentary assistant from Kitchener-Conestoga on this second reading of Bill 135. We often refer to it as the budget bill, and it is serious work indeed.

As she mentioned in her conversation about how hard we're working to repair some of the ills of the past—the neglect—and rebuilding, we're certainly doing that in terms of hydro. We've created a lot more generation in this province and we need to do that to make ourselves sustainable in jobs, our homes and elsewhere. Of course, we've put up a lot more transmission. The transmission lines we have installed, if put on one single wire, would stretch across the country. That is a lot of wire.

I think one of the key highlights in Bill 135 is our proposed Ontario clean energy benefit, which would provide eligible consumers with a benefit equal to 10% of the total cost of electricity on their bills, including the taxed portion, which people seem to notice quite a bit these days. So there's some relief there. That would take effect in January 2011, and we're proposing that it last a minimum of five years, so that we can assist families and large and small businesses to cope with their electricity needs and bills.

The member mentioned many points, but one that I noted in particular was that after going through this recession we have replaced 75% of the jobs, while the United States, where they're still mired in difficulty, only created 10%.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has really been doing yeoman's duty here this past week, and doing quite a good job of sticking to the notes they prepared for her. That's her job: to read the notes.

Mr. Norm Miller: You said Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon me. Let's correct that. The member for Kitchener-Conestoga has been doing yeoman's work. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka always does yeoman's work. He's our diligent whip as well as an integral part of the leadership.

The member from Kitchener-Conestoga has done yeoman's work reading the notes that the minister has given her to read. But, you know, I'm staying here this afternoon, along with my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, to listen to his comments on Bill 135.

Now, Bill 135 really isn't a budget bill per se. It has to do with the interim conditions of the economy in Ontario, which are troubling. It's a broad range of things that are troubling. It's almost as if they've lost control in terms of what buttons and what levers to push and when. The economy is going down as the trouble is going up, and the trouble is going up and they don't have the money to solve all the problems. Yet right now we know that the broad numbers of the budget are something in excess of \$100 billion; we have a deficit around \$20 billion, a 20% deficit, which means they're spending 20% more than they're taking in as revenue; and there are a couple of accounting moves that I'll discuss this afternoon, and our critic Mr. Miller, from Parry Sound-Muskoka, will broaden that out in a few minutes. So I'm here, and I hope other members will stay and listen to the work our critic Norm Miller has put into this to bring light to the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Kitchener-Conestoga, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I would like the acknowledge, of course, the comments of the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, the member from Timmins-James Bay, the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex and the member from Durham, who always talks about us reading our notes. So I'm going to implore him to find another comment or criticism he could throw at us; you know, you need to shake it up a little bit. But I'll tell you, in reading the notes I was very specific in a lot of detail, and clearly I need to go over some of it again.

We have done the children's activity tax credit for the people of Ontario, we have done the energy and property tax credit and now the Ontario clean energy benefit, which will see \$150 per year going to each household, \$1,700 a year to businesses and \$2,000 a year to farms.

We are also looking at the Securities Act or the OSC, and at strengthening the regulatory framework or oversight of credit rating agencies. The projected deficit in 2010, I will reiterate, has been cut by almost 25%.

I did want to talk about what the people are saying; I did spend quite a lot of time in the notes going over what we're hearing about this clean energy benefit and what we're hearing about the government's commitment to clean energy.

Rod Sheppard, from the Society of Energy Professionals, had this to say: "We're ecstatic. This plan is going to bring an awful lot of new jobs to the province." Jason Gray says, "The government's commitment to creating jobs in the new clean energy economy must be applauded and ... is an indication of smart planning for the future."

Deborah Doncaster from Green Energy Alliance says, "I think the plan is fantastic. This government has decided to phase out coal and replace it with renewable energy...."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Norm Miller: Because I know he always likes to get a word in, I am going to share some time with the member from Durham.

This afternoon, of course, it's the leadoff debate on Bill 135. I would give the government credit for creativity—that's for sure—when they come up with their names. It's the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010. This is yet another omnibus bill introduced by the McGuinty government. There are 21 schedules amending 18 separate acts, and this bill comes out of the fall economic statement.

The economic statement paints a fairly bleak picture of fiscal mismanagement by this government. We've known for some time about the spending addiction of the McGuinty government, but this bill really draws attention to a failed energy policy that is so out of touch with Ontario families and seniors that it required a \$1-billion silver bullet. Of course, we on this side of the House have been raising the alarm for a long time, but there have also been some very damning assessments about the McGuinty's government's management of taxpayer dollars.

Economist Livio Di Matteo commented on how Ontario is doing based on the recent Statistics Canada update to the provincial gross domestic product numbers. He points out that Ontario's poor performance this year is part of a track record spanning a decade in which Mr. McGuinty has been at the reins of the province's finances. Ontario has gone from the second-highest real per capita gross domestic product, second only to Alberta, to its current fourth place position in the country. Di Matteo says, "Ontario's economy appears to be adrift, with its government oblivious to the real state of its economy and seemingly unable to get a grip on economic and fiscal policy ... "Ontario's regulatory and interventionist government policy culture has not helped much." I would just add that this omnibus bill will only add to the regulatory burden here in the province of Ontario.

Professor Di Matteo points out the cost of the green energy agenda under this government and Ontario “is on the verge of being unable to deliver the standard of living that its citizens have come to expect.”

Other experts from the government’s own Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress point out that the rising electricity costs could nullify some of the promised 50,000 new jobs that they claim the Green Energy Act will create. This is something we’ve been saying for a long now: that increased energy costs will make industry uncompetitive in the province. You may create some jobs through huge subsidies that we all pay for, but when you drive up electricity prices 46%, as is predicted in the fall economic statement, we have businesses that just can’t compete if they’re located here in Ontario.

The task force cites work done by another group of experts, London Economics International, that estimated the Green Energy Act’s costs at between \$247 and \$631 per household per year, or the equivalent to two to six additional monthly electrical bills per year.

The Task Force on Competitiveness also reported that the predicted job creation impact is also based on what happened in Germany, which has already implemented similar green energy programs. Those programs initially translated into job increases that eventually disappeared due to rising energy prices.

Jim Milway, executive director of the government-funded task force said, “I think the province would be wise to have a fresh look at this and really ask themselves, is this the best way to go? I’d strongly reconsider it before we get too far wedded to this.” He also described the impact on rates as “probably ... higher than what the government says.”

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I will pause for a second at that point and say probably higher. It seems not very long ago that then-Energy Minister Smitherman was repeating over and over that the effect of the Green Energy Act would be 1% per year, and now we see that that is not the case at all.

In recognition of that fact, the government introduced schedule 13 in Bill 135, and schedule 13 is the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010. Again, I think they’re pretty creative with their language. It could be named something else; it could be “the panic before the election act” as well. I think a lot of observers will look at this 10% reduction and say that what it’s really all about is trying to curry favour with voters who are seeing their hydro bills go up dramatically.

You know, every day, constituents ask me in person, on the phone, by email and by mail, “How am I supposed to make ends meet?” Apparently, enough Liberal MPPs were getting the same message and the result is the clean energy benefit. Consumers would almost be expected to believe that they have clean energy to thank for the benefit, but taxpayers were pretty quick to catch on. First, the benefit is for 10%, but the government admits that the costs are going to rise, in the latest estimate, by 46% over five years. Second, taxpayers will be funding their own

benefit because the government will be borrowing \$1 billion per year to pay for the benefit, so \$5 billion over the five-year plan—borrowing that money and paying interest, so it obviously gets shifted on the debt, and we all pay for it eventually.

Adam Radwanski reports, “The Premier’s decision to offer a hydro rate cut, as part of his government’s fall economic update, is an admission of failure.” He suggests that adding an extra \$1 billion or more each year to an already enormous debt might not necessarily be a service to the taxpayers.

But this bill does much more than offer a clean energy carrot. As I already mentioned, this bill amends 18 separate pieces of legislation. Some of the highlights include schedule 7, the Financial Administration Act. There are some significant or—as the legal counsel in the Ministry of Finance say—consequential amendments that are highly technical in nature, and I don’t pretend to understand all of their intricacies. I might add that this is a substantive bill, and I had all of an hour and a half’s briefing on it, and so I’m sure there will be surprises we will learn as time goes on and as we have more time to analyze it.

There’s schedule 18, which was mentioned by the parliamentary assistant, about regulating over-the-counter derivatives. I would say that the general reaction to that has been surprise that the government is getting into it. I would say that there’s general agreement that uniform regulation is key to any global action plan, and it’s important that provincial proposals do nothing to threaten or bog down Canada’s ability to keep pace with other countries.

Ian Russell, chief executive of the Investment Industry Association of Canada, commented, “Because we now have two tracks, we now have a less efficient regulatory process going on, which will result in delays.”

He goes on to say: “There is no guarantee Ontario and other provinces will end up with the same rules, exacerbating an already ‘fractured’ regime of 13 provincial and territorial securities regulators.

“A lawyer who works closely with regulators and the government said provincial regulators ‘are in la-la land if they think they will take the lead on this’....”

Bankers and other regulators expressed surprise at the move, describing Liberals as “desperate to have this be an Ontario solution.” I think we can all see the desperation in many of this government’s most recent announcements.

There’s schedule 21, which deals with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. I would simply say that with the WSIB, this government has made a mess of it. The unfunded liability has essentially doubled from, in round terms, \$6 billion to \$12 billion. I did ask in the briefing I had, “Why doesn’t this \$12 billion show up on the government’s books?” The response I got was, “Well, because it’s funded by industry; it’s not directly funded by the government,” although this bill does make provisions for funds to go to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board from the consolidated revenue fund when

there are certain situations where there aren't enough funds around. I would hope that means that we will see this liability reflected in Ontario's financial statements.

It is clear that the bill responds to the Auditor General's critique of the WSIB, the board's funding, the independence of the board from the government and the ownership of the unfunded liability. The government is removing direct controls over the board and is no longer able to issue official policy directives. Moreover, the minister does not approve or reject the board's funding plans but may question those plans and engage an independent auditor or actuary to review the board's plans. Even then, the minister will not direct the board but the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act will compel the board to revise its plans in the event that the minister's review concludes that the insurance fund is unlikely to become sufficient by the date prescribed in the regulations.

The bill itself is void of specifics and is clearly an empty, pre-emptive shell awaiting the results of the Arthurs funding review. The funding review will provide the details for the actual funding targets and will provide the meat in the sandwich, culminating in the regulatory language. The bill is driven mainly by the regulations, as yet unwritten and unknown.

One strong hint as to some likely content of the regulations is provided in the definition of the board's funding obligations, now defined as two distinct obligations: one is to provide sufficient funding for "current benefits" and the other to "provide for future benefits." I anticipate that the regulations will require current benefits to be fully funded and paid by current revenues, unless there are unforeseen circumstances, thus avoiding operating losses contributing to the unfunded liability. Of course, investment fluctuations and other factors will still be at play. Some shortfalls funded through the future reserves will still be permissible.

The bill does not remove the government's discretion to set indexing levels above the prescribed amounts. Thus, the government is still open for direct lobbying with respect to increased worker benefits beyond the prescribed amounts.

On the funding and premium side of the ledger, however, the bill effectively insulates the government from employer lobbying. The government is statutorily powerless to intervene with the WSIB funding and premium rate decisions, except where there's evidence the board's funding plans may not be met, and even then, only to order a review. I would certainly be concerned about some of aspects of this section. Frankly, I don't trust that it won't mean great increases for a lot of the businesses in the province.

The bill has two appropriation provisions, schedules 10 and 19. One provides for spending between now and the budget following the election, and the other for the period up to the next budget. The fall economic statement confirms that the Liberal government is on track to add another, essentially, \$19 billion in provincial debt. As I was saying, only this government would congratulate

themselves on that. It seems to me that a few years ago they were railing about \$5.6 billion, and I'd point out that they had to be fairly creative to come up with that number back in 2003-04.

The government now spends \$2.13 million more per hour than it takes in; so every hour, it spends \$2.13 million more than it's bringing in. It's living well beyond its means. Despite four quarters of consecutive economic growth, the McGuinty government has only reduced the deficit by 3%, from \$19.3 billion in 2009 to \$18.7 billion in 2010. They have not reduced discretionary spending by one penny.

Expenses are down \$246 million as a result of lower interest on debt, explained by lower than projected interest rates and a lower borrowing requirement because of the Teranet revenue that nets the \$1 billion that the government is receiving for the Teranet deal. That's one that we will certainly have more questions about. We haven't seen the details on it, but we wonder about what it's going to mean for future costs for households as they use the land transfer system, and questions about the length of the deal being—I think it goes for 50 years—and just what that will mean for Ontario homeowners.

1650

However, bear in mind that the \$1 billion the government is spending to bring you the Ontario clean energy benefit is not reflected in the fall economic statement. So they say they saved \$1 billion from their prediction, but they didn't. The \$1 billion they had to borrow to provide the clean energy benefit is not reflected.

Under Premier McGuinty, program expenditures have increased by 80%, compared to a 60% increase in revenue. The total debt is up 60%, having increased \$88 billion.

I know the finance minister made a big deal about the fact that he was getting this billion dollars for Teranet. He was putting it against interest and that was going to save \$50 million a year, I believe is the figure he used.

If that's the case—they've added \$88 billion to the debt. That means Ontario residents, based on that calculation, are paying an extra \$4.4 billion in interest, if his calculation is correct, each and every year. And, of course, that's going up and up and up.

How does Ontario measure up against other provinces in Canada? Ontario's deficit in 2010 is projected to be \$18.7 billion. The deficits of every other province combined would equal \$12.4 billion, so the McGuinty government's deficit is \$6.3 billion greater than the rest of Canada combined.

If we measure the Ontario deficit against Quebec and British Columbia, we see that Quebec's deficit is less than a quarter of our own, at \$4.5 billion, and British Columbia's is a mere \$1.4 billion.

If we look at another economic indicator, we see that the unemployment rate in Ontario sits at 8.6%. It's higher than the national average of 7.9%. If you want to compare it to others, Russia is 6.6% and Mexico is 5.7%, to name a few.

While the Premier would blame Ontario's job situation on the global economic downturn, in fact, the unem-

ployment rate has surpassed Canada's national average every month since January 2007. That's almost two full years before the financial crisis. As a result, Ontario has acted as an anchor on Canada's wealth for the last three and a half years. Under the McGuinty government, Ontario has lost 295,000 manufacturing jobs, a 28% decline.

If we look at the standard of living of Ontarians under the McGuinty government, we see that it grew at a slower pace than anywhere else in Canada. It also lagged behind several states in the US, including California, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. In fact, I don't think that any member here would have to rely on statistics to confirm that. Anecdotal, I hear from constituents every day about how they struggle to keep abreast of mounting costs.

I'm going to take a moment to read some of those letters to you, because they put a face on the raw data. These are the forgotten people in Mr. McGuinty's Ontario, who need a voice in House. Here's a letter:

"Dear Norm:

"I have just completed a report on my energy costs with the new HST charges by Mr. McGuinty.

"I know there have been a lot of conversations regarding hydro costs, but the public is forgetting about heating costs and gasoline costs. I have a 1,700-square-foot home and I believe we do a better-than-average savings on our hydro expenses.

"Average adjusted kilowatt hours for 2009 was 836 kilowatt hours (12 months); average for 2010, 789 (10 months). Based on these figures over two years, my additional costs due to HST will be \$9.37 a month.

"I'm on a smart meter (McGuinty's private ATM) but not yet on time-of-use pricing.

"Fuel oil costs for the past two heating seasons of six deliveries per season:

"—2,591.1 litres for 2009 at an average of 83 cents a litre is an additional cost due to the HST of \$172.10, or \$28.68, per delivery;

"—2,583.9 litres for 2010, at an average of 87 cents a litre is an additional cost due to HST of \$181.29, or \$30.21, per delivery.

"These numbers are based on actual costs at the time of delivery and do not allow for increased fuel costs which will increase over the winter as per past history.

"I also wonder why we are paying GST and HST on gasoline. This is a tax on a tax, which should be illegal.

"We are also paying HST on Hydro One's debt reduction. This is paying back money for debt and should not be HST-taxable.

"We are retired and live on fixed company pensions, OAS and CPP. We are living comfortably on these pensions, but these taxes are taking that comfortable feeling away.

"We were planning on travelling and seeing this great country of Canada, but increased fuel costs and taxes have taken that privilege away.

"It makes me wonder why I worked my butt off for 45 years and now have to sit at home and shut the lights out, turn the heat down and watch the car sit in the garage.

"I am just trying to make a point here because I do appreciate what I have and there are many, many people in this province and country who are not as well off as I am.

"A first good step would be to remove the HST from all energy items.

"Best regards,

"Ron Stephens."

From another constituent:

"Good day, Mr. Miller,

"I am writing to you in your capacity of finance critic for the province of Ontario.

"I want to point out that my car insurance has gone up almost 30%, while my coverage has been decreased by 50%. If I am thinking correctly, there is an 80% difference here. What can I, as a citizen, do to express my shock? I have called my insurance broker and expressed my deep concern.

"A letter I received from my insurers tells me the Ontario government allowed these increases. Along with the increased taxes due to the HST being spread to many new items, my spending dollar is less and less. You can be sure that as a senior citizen my income is not going up to match any of this.

"I see the people of BC had an intelligent former parliamentarian spearhead their campaign to negate the HST in that province. A referendum is being held to allow public input by way of vote. I wonder how we might do the same." That's that one.

I have another one:

"Hello Mr. Miller,

"In regard to the increase (smart meter) and time schedules for high and low usage of kilowatt hours. Going back to 1969 and 1970, Ontario Hydro came to our home as it was properly insulated for electric heat and encouraged us to go to the Medallion home for lower heating costs, which that is what we are now (everything is electric). What I am in hopes of is a lower rate when Ontario Hydro encouraged us to go this route of a Medallion home.

"Now this harmonized tax! Where does the Liberal government stop? Please help us as much as you can with the position ... you hold."

It goes on: "Old age pension, and Canada pensions don't even come close to keeping up with gas prices. This is only the chip of the iceberg, as folks say.

"So now it's Ontario Hydro, low interest rates, HST and the list goes on.

"One last item is on medications. We do not need more cost. Let's put the Liberal leader in our position. I am sure his way of thinking would change. He receives too much power to make money flow too freely. We need help in the medical field and medications, not cutbacks.

"Thank you for reading my letter and again work on Mr. McGuinty and his Liberals on these issues."

I have another letter, my last letter—of course, I have hundreds of letters, but this is a sample letter: "The provincial government are a bunch of thieves and they are"—I probably shouldn't read that; "misleading" is

what it says—"when they say how much better off the people will be with this ... HST.

"Poor seniors like me (I'm 75 years old, crippled with osteoarthritis) have little enough to live on now. I depend on the OAS, supplement and Gains to keep a roof over my head, keep warm in cold weather and have something to eat. By the time I get all my bills for the month paid I have less than \$100 to buy groceries and now McGuinty's gang of robbers is taxing our heating fuel and hydro—and those of us who live in Muskoka apparently won't be getting any aid in paying this exorbitant tax.

"I was taught in my grade school geography lessons that the counties are in the southern part of the province and the districts are in the north. Norm Miller MPP's riding distinctly says, 'The district of Parry Sound—Muskoka.' Dwight Duncan and Dalton McGuinty have obviously never had a geography lesson in their misbegotten lives or they would know that.

"I was born and raised in Muskoka and I can tell you for a fact that many times Muskoka is several degrees colder in the winter than the Lakehead (Thunder Bay), the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and Nunavut.

"We need that \$130 to help pay that tax on our heating fuel and hydro. Many seniors and other poor people will no doubt die from hypothermia in their own homes in Muskoka, if we don't get these funds."

That was Audrey Thompson who sent me that letter. She's noting, I think, that Muskoka specifically was removed from the north for provincial programs by the McGuinty government, and she's pointing out, as I know district chair Gord Adams has in the past, that districts were considered part of the north, and counties in the south.

The energy front is a huge part of this bill, with the justification for this 10% reduction. But I think the energy policies of late—we've seen the energy plan rolled out—are being roundly criticized by many of the pundits out there.

1700

I note that Tom Adams, who is an expert on energy, has written extensively about it. Just recently, on November 22, he wrote:

"Dwight Duncan, now Ontario's finance minister, told the Legislature in 2004: 'It would be irresponsible for the province and taxpayers to continue to subsidize electricity consumption, because it jeopardizes our ability to invest in health care and education. This is simply not sustainable, nor is it acceptable. The people of this province deserve better.' He committed to 'take the politics and politicians out of electricity pricing.'

"Where is the Dwight Duncan of 2004?

"Then, with the deficit at \$5.6 billion, he said it was unacceptable for taxpayers to shoulder a portion of the cost of electricity.

"Today, with the deficit at \$18.7 billion, he engineers techniques to split the bill for the McGuinty government's careless, profligate electricity policies between staggering power rate increases today and enduring pain for tomorrow's taxpayers.

"Duncan's new electricity plans are riddled with contradictions. He claims that the government's new long-term electricity plan will lead to 'stable and predictable pricing.' Yet, in his own statement, he admits that: 'Over the next five years, however, residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46%, which is an average annual rate of about 7.9%.'

"When McGuinty's government introduced its Green Energy Act last year, enshrining sole-sourcing of power contracts in law, it promised that the rate impact would be limited to 1% per year. Then energy minister George Smitherman told the *Toronto Star*: 'I have been very clear about it. One per cent per year, incremental of a person's electricity bill, with corresponding capability through investments in conservation for people to lessen their use of electricity.'

"One glimmer of truthfulness in the economic statement is the admission that renewable power generation is the main driver for the rate increases. This admission contradicts the recent surge of denials from government and renewable energy apologists. Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, Gordon Miller, for example, has been on a speaking tour pleading with electricity executives to convince consumers that rates are stable.

"Applying the government's estimates, by 2015 the cost of sole-sourced green energy contracts above the market value of the power will exceed \$4 billion per year.

"Slavishly, Duncan cleaves to Premier McGuinty's propaganda slogan that the 'Green Energy Act will create 50,000 new jobs in three years.' The employment losses galloping electricity cost increases have and will cause are ignored.

"Duncan's retreat from truth and principle grows with his explanation for how the public will pay for his blatant vote-buying scheme. Next year, the government claims the 'benefit' will cost \$1.1 billion. Until this corrosive shell game is killed, the taxpayer hit will follow skyrocketing electricity costs.

"Notwithstanding record deficits, the cost can be accommodated due to what Duncan calls the McGuinty government's record of 'prudent management of finances.' Duncan claims that provincial income from crown-owned Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and Hydro One are projected to match the cost of the rebate. Duncan ignores previous decisions pledging all of OPG's and Hydro One's profits to servicing debts left by the former Ontario Hydro. Shifting funds from servicing Ontario Hydro debts to paying for rebates would only work if Duncan could magically spend dollars twice.

"With little hope that even very aggressive actions by a new government and an economic rebound better than any current forecasts can get the Ontario government out of deficit any time over the next five years, all of the costs for the 'benefit' plan will be borrowed, to be repaid in the distant future.

"McGuinty's Green Energy Act, passed last year, erased more than a century of electricity policy consensus based on the idea that the purpose of the power

system, irrespective of policy instruments used, was to serve consumers. Now the purpose of the power system is to achieve green economic and social transformation.

"Duncan's economic statement breaks from our traditions more profoundly. Historically, a fairly solid wall separated electricity sector financial flows from provincial governmental finances. This compartmentalization provided some tenuous measure of transparency, accountability and independence for the power system from political meddling. Now, the financial flows of the electricity system are deeply embedded in the government's daily financial life.

"McGuinty claimed his electricity policies, enshrined in the Green Energy Act, would benefit future generations. Although our bills are skyrocketing, Duncan has signed an additional blank cheque payable by our kids to fund irresponsible green initiatives. Duncan has polluted the power system with unprecedented political meddling and created a whole new class of taxpayer liability."

That's an article written by Tom Adams. He's a Toronto-based energy consultant and, I would say, a keen observer of what goes on. That's quite a damning article of the government's policies.

The National Post's Lee Greenberg writes, "Green Energy Costs Lowballed, Task Force Says.

"Ontario's government is overstating the benefits of its Green Energy Act and underestimating hydro rate increases, according to a new report on economic competitiveness set to be released on Tuesday.

"The report—written by the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress"—I might point out that is the government's own commissioned report—"points out that rising electricity costs could nullify some of the 50,000 new jobs the Liberals claim will be created.

"The prediction is based on some stunning price estimates that go much further than the government's own projections.

"The task force notes a study of the Ontario green energy program by London Economics International, a global consultancy that estimated the act's cost at between \$247 and \$631 per household per year—or the equivalent of two to six additional monthly electrical bills per year.

"The task report also cites the study by Aegent Energy Advisors Inc., an energy consulting group, which estimated recently that partly because of expenses related to the act, residential electricity costs are expected to increase at an annual rate of 6.7% to 8% over the next five years.

"The predicted job-creation impact is also based, the record says, on what happened in Germany, which has implemented a similar green energy program that initially saw job increases that were eventually eroded by rising power prices.

"I think the province would be wise to have a fresh look at this and really ask themselves, is this the best way to go," said Jim Milway, executive director for the Institute of Competitiveness and Prosperity, the task

force's government-funded research arm. 'I'd strongly reconsider it before we get too far wedded to this.'

"Mr. Milway says the impact on rates 'will probably be higher than what the government says.'

"The task force, created by the Ontario government in 2001 to recommend strategies to bolster long-term wealth, also casts doubt on the job creation from the act.

"While the Green Energy Act may create 50,000 new jobs, the higher energy costs may result in employment losses elsewhere in the economy, particularly in industries that are intensive energy users,' the report says.

"The Green Energy Act offers huge 20-year guaranteed contracts for wind, solar, hydro and bioenergy projects at rates up to 20 times more generous than the current market price for electricity. The legislation was seen as a way to kick-start a homegrown green energy industry, but has lately become the focus of consumer anger as its costs begin to show up on home electricity bills.

"Those bills have risen 20% in the past seven months.

"In the past week, the government has moved to mitigate the mounting political damage, introducing a \$1.1-billion hydro subsidy on Thursday and hinting Sunday it will expand off-peak pricing by two hours each weeknight, moving the start to 7 p.m. from its current 9 p.m.

"A major report to be released by energy minister Brad Duguid on Tuesday is also expected to set limits on the amount of green energy contracts being awarded.

"The task force report, meanwhile, also points to continued troubles with productivity in Ontario's economy. Ontario ranks 14th of 16 equivalent-sized North American states and provinces. Ontario businesses invest less in research and development, produce fewer patents and its managers are still not as good as those in comparable U.S. jurisdictions."

That article, again, is painting a pretty bleak—doing a pretty bleak assessment by the government's own task force on the effects of the Green Energy Act. It's not just the usual partisan comments from the opposition or third party. That's a task force that the government themselves commissioned.

Before I hand it over to the member from Durham, the last article that I wanted to get on the record was a comment by economist Livio Di Matteo on the state of Ontario's economy. It's called "Laggard Ontario."

1710

"Dalton McGuinty has presided over the province's economic decline.

"The Ontario government will be tabling its fall economic statement in the Legislature on Thursday. Premier Dalton McGuinty, who has been seemingly unaware of the impact of his energy and economic policies on the province's economy, would do well to take heed from the danger signs provided by another update—the recent Statistics Canada update to provincial GDP numbers.

"The new StatsCan numbers show that, as a result of the recession, real gross domestic product in 2009 fell in every province except Manitoba. Moreover, the declines

were steepest in Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario.

"Being in the company of so many poor performers will not be a suitable defence for Ontario's economic record for two main reasons. First, while Ontario's decline was smaller than that in Newfoundland, Alberta and Saskatchewan, those provinces can blame their drop primarily on the fall in natural resource commodity prices, namely oil. Ontario's key natural resource sector—forestry—while hit hard over the last decade, is not as important a sector to Ontario as oil and gas is in these other provinces. The economy will grow in Newfoundland, Alberta and Saskatchewan as oil and gas prices recover.

"Second, Ontario's dismal performance caps a decade of dismal performance. Ontario has become a laggard in per capita GDP, as highlighted when it entered the ranks of the 'have-not' provinces and began to collect equalization. A survey of statistics for the last two decades shows that Ontario's share of total provincial GDP has declined from 42% in 1990 to 37% in 2010. More ominous, the bulk of that decline has occurred since 2000—largely coinciding with McGuinty's decade of political power. Whereas in 1990, productive Ontario's share of national output exceeded its population share, we now are witnessing the sorry spectacle of the reverse.

"When Ontario's economic productivity performance is examined in terms of real per capita GDP, it emerges that Ontario's output has stagnated for an entire decade. Between 2000 and 2010, real per capita GDP in Ontario actually declined by 8%. While one may wish to ascribe this to the impact of the recession and the global financial crisis since 2008, the fact remains that Ontario's performance was the worst of all 10 provinces."

The government's always blaming the world economic situation, but we were the worst of all 10 provinces; we are the worst.

"Indeed, over the first decade of the 21st century, eight out of 10 provinces experienced an increase in their real per capita output, while only Ontario and New Brunswick saw declines. Even Quebec, which has been the historical poor economic sibling to Ontario, saw its real per capita GDP grow 6% during the decade. Since 2000, Ontario's real per capita GDP has gone from being 25% above the provincial average to being barely at the provincial average. From having the second-highest real per capita GDP in the country (second only to oil-rich Alberta), it is now the fourth highest. No wonder Ontario is now receiving equalization payments.

"Ontario's economy appears to be adrift, with its government oblivious to the real state of its economy and seemingly unable to get a grip on economic and fiscal policy. While global economic circumstances have played a part in Ontario's predicament, Ontario's regulatory and interventionist government policy culture has not helped much.

"Witness the initiatives of recent years: the messianic closing of cost-effective coal plants and implementing of higher-cost wind and solar energy initiatives in the name

of the environment, raising minimum wages, implementing and then rescinding eco-taxes, timing the arrival of the HST with a recession, sequestering large land areas of the province's north from economic development. Rather than the economy, priorities that have consumed the government's energy include banning pit bulls and pesticides, as well as both smoking and cell-phones in vehicles (but then actually considering cell-phone use in schools) and debating the merits of mixed martial arts fighting.

"In the midst of all the economic carnage, the Ontario government is presiding over a massive hike in electricity costs—an energy source that used to be the foundation of Ontario's economic advantage. Add to this the fiscal deficit and a net debt that is expected to reach \$240 billion by 2011, and one has an economy that is on the verge of being unable to deliver the standard of living that its citizens have come to expect.

"That Ontario's future economic welfare is in a clear and present danger is a sad understatement."

That's written by Livio Di Matteo, an economist who's at Lakehead University. It sounds like it's an opposition comment, but it's actually an economist making those comments.

In conclusion, before I hand it over to the member from Durham, I would simply say that this bill enables the government to continue to live beyond its means. It allows it to continue to spend the \$2.1 million an hour more than it's taking in. It enables possible future tax increases. It enables future beer tax increases, particularly for small microbreweries. It will increase the red tape and regulation in the province of Ontario. Frankly, I certainly don't trust that the McGuinty government won't do all of those things.

I actually believed Mr. McGuinty in 2003 when he said, in the midst of the election campaign—and signed documents saying it—"I won't raise your taxes." I must admit, in the midst of that election campaign I thought, "If he's going to do that, that would make a lot of people comfortable that it wouldn't be a tax-and-spend Liberal government." But he got elected, then immediately broke that promise and has demonstrated it to be very much a tax-and-spend Liberal government.

In conclusion, I'd just say we will not be supporting this bill that enables the government to keep on spending beyond its means.

I'm pleased to hand it over now to the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened intently, and I certainly learned plenty from the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka, our finance critic, who I really want to thank here today personally for the work he has done and his staff, and also the Ministry of Finance staff who took the time to try to untangle this omnibus bill. Really, that's what it's turned out to be. As our member Mr. Miller has pointed out, there's a lot in the bill. There are 21 different schedules, and it's hard to know where to begin. I guess you start with what it didn't do.

You knew right from the beginning, when the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, stood on

November 18 and he had a bill here, a speech that he made—I have a copy of the Hansard; I’ve had a look through that as well—praising themselves for doing such a great job. There’s no doubt; they tried. I want to set a respectful tone here.

Some of the comments made by the member and the independent experts who were quoted—Jim Milway, and Di Matteo from Lakehead University, and other experts who know they’re on a spending spree that can’t be sustained. That’s the troubling part. You wonder when they’re going to be straightforward with the people of Ontario.

I think people are ready for the medicine that’s necessary to get well. They want the recovery plan now. If you look at their plan, it’s anything but. Just to put a frame around it, the frame around this is keeping the numbers something that we can all explain fairly easily. We’ve got a budget in excess of \$100 billion. They’ve increased spending by about 70%. I’m not claiming that measurement in itself is bad. What I’m saying is, the people of Ontario should ask themselves, “Is it any better?” You’re spending more money. Is it any better? Are waiting times in emergency rooms fixed? Are there more doctors? Are there more nurses? Is there any plan for mental health? Is there any plan for the children’s aid society? How is the poverty task force doing? Are the housing issues solved? You start to add it up.

I think the energy file tops it off. In the last week or so, we’ve had two bills already that have tried to address the errors they made on the whole energy file. In fact, the plan that they have is described in a paper that we often refer to; it’s the confidential document here that we’ve recovered. Ask the Premier to release it and respond to it. It’s called Renewable Energy Matters—Campaign Outline. It’s privileged and confidential, and it was delivered in a brown envelope, by the Sussex group. In this plan is an admission that they were told by almost all the consultants, as well as the independent experts out there, right from—you mentioned Tom Adams and others who work as consultants. They never try to diminish themselves and their rights to their opinion. They express them professionally, and I guess you have to respond that they’re trying to be helpful. I really believe they’re not trying to diminish themselves or place themselves as such an outsider in commenting and working. Those people work with all governments, and that needs to be the case.

1720

But when I look through the bill, there are several sections. Let’s start it this way. Our critic, Mr. Miller—I hope people are listening—has suggested that we could have a motion to divide the bill. That idea of dividing the bill would allow us to support the provisions in the bill that we need. That’s what they do. They put this omnibus bill together, Bill 135, in such a way that they’re going to say, “You didn’t support that relief for the energy bills.”

Hon. James J. Bradley: That’s right.

Mr. John O’Toole: That’s called a wedge issue, and the former Minister of the Environment and energy—I

would say he’s admitting it here today, and I commend him for that. His honesty is commendable.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, no. I never admitted anything.

Mr. John O’Toole: Well, I think he should actually stand in his seat, because I’m putting it on the table: a motion to divide. He has admitted that they loaded this with wedge issues, 21 different sections. We’re asking for a motion to divide so that we can deal with this section by section.

I think the compendium of the bill is really worth a read, and I encourage my constituents to stay in touch, because it is a fairly large bill. I think the name is so cynical, I’m putting this on the table as well: Maybe we should amend this to be “the truth that this is all about we’ve made mistakes” bill. Here’s what they call it: Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act. They have whacked them and stacked them like you wouldn’t believe.

Look at what the HST is doing to the average household. Look at your energy bill. Look at what they’re doing to the province of Ontario. They’re decimating it, and this bill is saying they’re blaming it on the families now. They’re saying, “Start to manage your job. We’re going to stop—you can’t eat junk food and you can’t do this and that, no pit bulls”—the Father Knows Best bill would be a good way to put it.

Quite honestly, and in all sincerity, if you look at the preamble of the bill, you’ll find that it does say a lot of things. Under the section under the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario—well, they’ve tried to rein them in several times. The Assessment Act: We know the impact, and the Auditor General and the Ombudsman are looking at that. The Commodity Futures Act is another one, and the Corporations Tax Act, which comes under my specific critic file. Employer Health Tax Act: They’re probably going to raise it again. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario: There are huge issues with respect to pensions, which they keep blaming on other levels of government.

But, really, this is not a budget; this is actually the fall economic statement. That’s what it is, let’s be honest; it’s not the budget. They’re not finished yet. They aren’t finished spending. In fact, as I said before, the last two weeks we’ve had bills in here, including one that reduced the burden on seniors. That bill, annualized, is \$1.3 billion per year of increased spending—an additional \$1.3 billion in spending.

Now, Bill 135 has one provision in it, the 10% reduction in your energy bill. It sounds like an election thing to me. That costs \$1 billion every year. Now, the funny thing there is, it doesn’t actually start until next January.

There’s another provision that they haven’t costed yet, so we’ll see it, the smart meter you have at home that actually is a tax machine: What it does is tell the utility when exactly you use the electrons, and that smart meter says, if you use it at the high peak, you’re going to pay twice as much as you would pay off peak.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Around half. They're arguing. Well, it's not quite a 100% increase; it's probably a 45% increase in the cost.

Here's the issue, though: They've changed it by two hours. The lower rate, the mid-peak rate, will come in a little earlier—two hours' difference—but that's not going to click in until next May, just before the election, and that's going to cost money because that's a loss of revenue. Why? Because when you use electricity on peak, it costs just under 10 cents, and when you use it off-peak, at base peak, it's about five cents, roughly. So it's a 100% increase by any number. If that's what it is, call it what it is. Tell the people the truth, and you'll be free.

Here's the real issue, though: Those two things alone cost about \$3 billion. That comes out of the taxpayers' pockets by way of your electricity bill.

Another thing that's really interesting in following up on is the HST—that's not done yet. Those cheques that you've been getting to offset some of that will stop next year just before the election. They're so cynical about this thing. The money they're giving you in these cheques is your money from your federal taxes, that transitional funding. So that is an admission there that the HST in itself went too far, too deep. They know it now and they're backing off. We call it backtracking on almost everything they've said, and they're not finished yet because all of this backtracking is saying, "Oops, we made a mistake." This bill could easily be called the "Oops, we made a mistake" fiscal update.

Let's work a little harder on the energy bill itself in the little time that our critic left me, which is another issue—maybe deliberately, but I'm going to ask for more time later on.

Quite honestly, what I'd do, Mr. Speaker—and you would know this, because of the way I attack things, just by listening to my constituents. Mr. Miller read the letters from his constituents, but I'm not going to take you down that road. I'm just going to take you down the road of a scan of what the intelligent, generally well-informed media people are saying. Here's one, for instance, from the Toronto Star. We often refer to it as the Liberal briefing note. What does it say about the power plan that was announced by Premier McGuinty yesterday? I think it's right. I agree with many parts of it, especially the part about Durham getting about \$33 billion. How can I argue with that?

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Don't laugh now. That's a sign that Durham's going to prosper, but the rest of Ontario is going to pay big time.

Here's the deal: The Toronto Star headline reads, "Power Plan Lacks Detail." I guess it does. It's 20 years into the future and beyond. In fact, this is like the promise they made in 2003: "I won't raise your taxes." Guess where we are today? The health tax, the largest tax in history; HST, the second largest—well, it's the largest. Actually, the health tax is now in second place.

The mantra of the Liberals has returned: Tax and spend. The problem is, they have a spending problem, an addiction. The Minister of Finance—and the Premier—should stand up and say, "My name is Dwight Duncan and I have a spending problem." He's got to take the 20-step plan. I'm telling you.

Here, they talk about what the investments are going to be. This is the part that gets really interesting. This plan is, they're going to spend \$33 billion on nuclear and they're going to spend \$14 billion on wind. I know that in my riding of Durham, and I can say it with confidence that I'm listening to those people, the concerned wind group, as well as in the city of Kawartha Lakes—the member should be listening. The election's coming up. You better stand up for your constituents, not for the Premier. He won't be there to help you get elected.

Wind is not very popular, and yet—I can't believe it. If you look at the supply-mix side of energy, they've got wind energy as producing more electricity than natural gas. Wind energy, by all the experts, is called a non-dispatchable generation source. In other words, dispatchable energy is when you can turn it on and put it on the grid, like a gas plant, a nuclear plant, a coal plant or a natural gas plant. Even a hydroelectric plant to some extent is dispatchable, but wind, by the experts, is called an intermittent power source. Sometimes it's windy, and you get electrons.

1730

Here's the irony of that, on the wind side. Wind has got what they call a protocol for dispatch. Any of these renewables, under the feed-in tariff, have first draw. In other words, they will be the first ones to be dispatched, when they're available. When they're dispatched, that means the people in the natural gas plant sit down and play cards. You're not saving a cent because they're still going to be at that plant—whether it's a natural gas plant or a nuclear plant that's being shut down—playing cards, reading a book or whatever they do, because they're going to let the windmills put the electrons on the grid so you don't have to put coal or whatever in the thing. I think that that \$14 billion is gone with the wind—that's a novel they should probably read.

Conservation: That is something we would support. In fact, they cancelled some of the initiatives that we had for incenting people to update their homes, whether it's heating, air conditioning, insulation, energy-efficient appliances etc., and the EnerStar program. They cancelled that. Their plan for conservation is to charge you so much that you can't cook your food or wash your clothes until it's off-peak, in the middle of the night. In fact, the Premier said at a school full of kindergarten kids around him, "Tell your people to do your laundry on the weekends." That's what he said.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not making it up; it's in the paper. Read it.

Transmission: They're spending \$9 billion in transmission. In fact, most of that is to get the wind from out in Lake Ontario or up on the Oak Ridges moraine or somewhere to where it's needed.

Solar: I have some sympathy with the solar suggestion, but I think people should be allowed to feed it directly into their home, like they do in some other countries now where you heat hot water with it, where you are able to have other applications in the home. Let the people invest, save and see it the next day when they turn that switch on.

What's wrong with allowing them to be empowered, as opposed to the big grid? Do you know why? They don't want people to get off the grid. No, sir. Because they've got to pay off that \$86 billion of debt. If they allowed people to get off the grid or use some less power off the grid, they would be stranding those assets. I tell you, in the future, if you look at the energy file, I believe that Brad Duguid and the Premier have gone down the absolutely wrong road, totally.

If you look at California and what they're doing, it's an innovation. It's called Bloom Energy. Bloom Energy build small hydrogen reformers and they build small dispatchable nuclear that could heat a subdivision; no transmission and line loss, for which you pay 1.3% on your bill. They actually have what they call distributive generation. These are ideas that they should be thinking about. I'm so disappointed.

But the real issue here is, I think you should read the report. I'm going to ask the viewers of Ontario to look something up; if not, call me, and I will get it to you. It's worth reading. This is by Terence Corcoran. It's in the media, the Financial Post, dated October 7, and it says this. IKEA, the furniture company—it was asked today in the House—is going to put \$4.6 million into installing 3,790 solar panels, and on it—I've got to cut, because they've cut me off here. They're going to put in \$4 million and they're going to get out about the equivalent of making a profit of almost double in less than seven years. Why? Because the feed-in tariff is so good, they're going to make more money selling electricity to Dalton McGuinty than they will selling bookcases. I'm telling you, they get it.

They said today they blame the farmers—they said that we're blaming farmers. No wonder—why did you cut the farmers off? Why did you cut them off? They were using the farmers—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Why did you cut them off? You shouldn't cut them off; you should allow them all to have it, because it's such a good deal for the farmers. They haven't done one other thing for the farmers. In fact, our critic—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: —a marvellous job on that file.

Now, the media—I seek unanimous consent for more time, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham has asked for unanimous consent for additional time. Agreed? Sorry, I heard a no.

Mr. John O'Toole: They don't want to hear this.

“Ontario Plan Will See Hydro Bills Double By 2030”—that's in the National Post.

The next article is in the Toronto Star: “Rising Power: Ontario's new energy plan will see prices double in 20 years.”

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's it, Speaker. Now I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from Durham speak for almost an hour about many different things.

I want to go back, first, to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I know he listed many different articles from many different papers mentioning the growth and productivity in the province of Ontario. I want to tell him that our productivity in this province is higher than any other province in Canada and is the best in any jurisdiction around the planet. Also, we're performing very well. We've recouped most of the jobs we lost, due to our economic strategy and our strategy to attract more businesses to come to the province of Ontario.

I also want to say that probably in his eyes and his party's eyes, we're not performing very well and we are the worst province. In our eyes, as the government here, we believe strongly in the province of Ontario. It's the best province in this nation and the best province around the whole planet. That's what we believe on this side. We have a great interest to maintain our ability and our prosperity in this province.

The member from Durham spoke about a lot of things. He said that the government never hired nurses. We've hired almost 10,000 nurses in the province of Ontario. And now we have one million more people with a doctor in the province of Ontario.

Interjection: And 2,300 more doctors.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, and 2,300 more doctors in the province of Ontario.

I have no idea where he gets his statistics. I'm not sure what he has against the poor people in the province of Ontario, the vulnerable people in this province or the seniors in this province. I think on this side we have an obligation to support the vulnerable people among us and support the seniors.

Also, he mentioned something very important. He complained about Ikea: “Why are you supporting Ikea?” We'll support any outlet—as the Premier mentioned this morning, small farms, large farms, whoever wants to participate in green energy—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I certainly listened intently to my good friend and colleague the member from Durham. I just wish that we could get unanimous consent to let him speak longer, because I find he has worthwhile things to say, and he says them reasonably and at length. The last is especially relevant in this situation.

Be that as it may, the point that he was making, that possibly we could change the bill's name to—maybe it

should be the “managing responsibility act of Premier McGuinty.” That would make a lot more sense, because I believe that this government has not in fact been managing the expenses and the finances of this province in a responsible manner.

We are in grave difficulty in this province. Spending is out of control. We have an enormous deficit, and the plan to reduce the deficit over the next few years assumes a 2% spending maximum, when we know that is totally irrelevant. It's totally irresponsible to even have such a plan. The police in our region just got a 6% increase for one year, as I understand it, and somehow we are going to limit our expenses to 2%? We know that's not going to happen.

That's unfortunate, and it's about time the citizens of this province took a good look at what is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

1740

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, thank you for this opportunity. I always appreciate following the member from Durham and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. The member from Durham has contributed a lot to the English language, a lot to literature, and again today he made that contribution.

I want to go back to the reality of the bill before us. The reality is that because the McGuinty government has made such profound mistakes when it comes to the electricity file, because this government is proceeding with a plan which is built around a nuclear core, this government is looking desperately for ways to deal with the political problems it's created. The bill before us today, which puts in place the electricity credit, the 10% refund, has everything to do with votes, everything to do with an election next fall and very little, if anything, to do with a solid electricity policy for the province of Ontario.

This act reflects the anger that this government is picking up from its dealings with the people of Ontario, people who watch how this government has mismanaged the file, made mistakes that replicate those made over the last few decades, and now, in a moment of panic, is trying the best it can to paper over those mistakes and defend itself.

It's no surprise that the member from Durham and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka went after the government as heavily as they did. It is no surprise that they expressed their frustration about this government's mismanagement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to make a comment on the speech by both members opposite, primarily focusing on the energy file when it came to the fall economic statement. I think I'm going to make a bit of a prediction here today. I'm not going to go too far out on a limb, but I'm going to make a bit of a prediction that at some point over the course of the next several months, the official opposition, the Conservative Party, is going to come forward with an energy plan. They don't have one now.

They're spending a tremendous amount of time criticizing ours and they're spending a tremendous amount of time criticizing us on the energy file, but so far no plan.

So what do we know? We know today that about 50% of the energy production in the province of Ontario comes from nuclear, so at some point the official opposition is going to have to stand on their feet and tell the people in the province of Ontario what it is they plan on doing, should they be so honoured as to be the government in Ontario, about the nuclear file: how they're going to maintain it, how they're going to refurbish it and how they're going to cost it. They're going to have to tell people, because so far, as I understand it, they're not in favour of nuclear. We certainly understand that they are not in favour of green energy, be it wind or solar. We heard the member today talk about the 16,000 sweetheart deals, primarily referring to the microFIT program, which is one of the most popular programs in the history of the province of Ontario. We also know that in 2003, they committed to closing coal. So what do we know? They were going to get away from coal, they don't support nuclear, and they're not in favour of the clean, green energy program. So it's going to be very interesting to see what they bring forward when they bring forward their energy plan.

I'll tell you what else they didn't support. They supported closing coal. I had two of those plants in my riding: one in Atikokan and one in Thunder Bay. In 2003, when your former leader committed to closing those plants, he never talked about converting them. There's a cost associated with those conversions. I'm very proud of the money that's going to be invested in my riding to convert both of those plants. That's a cost that's attributed to the energy file, and I want to hear, when you come forward with your plan, if you're going to still go forward and remain committed to the conversion of the Atikokan plant and the Thunder Bay generating station: one to biomass for the first time in the history of the province and one to natural gas as well. I'm looking forward to hearing your plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I probably won't have a chance to comment on all the people that spoke, but I'll start with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and make it very clear that the PC Party is in support of nuclear power. We recognize that it's 50% of the baseload power. We wonder why you've taken seven years to do anything. You've been sitting over there for seven years not acting as we dig ourselves a bigger and bigger hole.

The member from London–Fanshawe talked about how he likes the province. Yes, we think this is the best province in the country; we think it's the best place to live in the world. Unfortunately, it has become a have-not province under the McGuinty government. I've noted some of the comments on the Green Energy Act, but I also note a recent study that shows that Mr. McGuinty is the worst financial manager of all the provinces in the

country. It wasn't us; it was a recent study looking at all the provinces and their debt and deficits etc.

The member from Durham brought up how the government's plan with the energy policy is to confuse the public. We have the Sussex campaign outline, which shows they have a definite strategy to try to confuse the issue of energy so the public doesn't really know what's going on and won't just look at their hydro bill.

The member from Toronto—Danforth very correctly points out that the 10% discount is not about energy policy and has everything to do with an election that's going to be happening on October 6, 2011. And the member from Cambridge talked about how the spending of this government is out of control and how their plan to balance by 2017, beyond two elections, is not credible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to round off this afternoon. I understand that I will have an opportunity to continue my leadoff debate tomorrow morning.

Speaker, as you are well aware, and as anyone who goes to the Internet and reads this bill can see, this bill touches on derivatives, it touches on property taxes for hydro poles, it talks about debt regulation for boards of education—many things. What I want to talk about with regard to this bill, though, are two fairly large items and one item outside of the bill that affects its ability to come into effect—affects its actualization.

The largest piece is the Ontario clean energy benefit. That Ontario clean energy benefit is the most important task this bill has to deliver on, because it's so critical to the government's survival. The other thing that needs to be touched on is the WSIB changes and the issues that are addressed in this bill. Outside of the bill and affecting whether or not there will actually be the funds to deliver the goods is the sale of future operations of the Teranet electronic land registry. But first, let's talk about the context within which this bill has been introduced.

We have a government that is engaged in policies around electricity and hydro that are proving to be extremely unpopular. This is a government that is within 11 months of an election date and is looking for a quick fix. I have no doubt that somewhere in the back of the Premier's office, communications and strategy thinkers sat down and said, "You know, let's have a very quick, clean hit of a 10% cut. That will calm people down. It will put oil on the waters, and we may just slip through after all."

This government is coming up to an election, and it has money troubles. It needs a quick fix. They thought about whom they could copy. They looked back at recent Ontario history and realized that Mike Harris was in trouble before an election in the 1990s and sold off the 407 for a quick hit of cash. In fact, if you think about this clean energy benefit, you can think back to Ernie Eves, who needed to borrow almost \$1 billion as well to buy down the cost of electricity. So it isn't as though what is being done is without precedent. In fact, there's a history of governments in the last 15 years coming up to an

election date and either selling off assets for quick cash or incurring large debt in order to deal with a situation that has troubled the people of Ontario.

What did the government say? What did the McGuinty government say about what it was going to do before it introduced this bill? The headline on its media release was, "McGuinty Government Introduces New Measures to Help Ontario Families and Reduce Debt." Their media release said, "The Ontario government today introduced the Ontario clean energy benefit, which would provide a 10% benefit to help consumers manage rising electricity prices for the next five years."

Now, in the media release, the government didn't say, "Those prices are rising because we made a mistake by investing in time-of-use smart meters." No, that wasn't mentioned. The government didn't mention that it had decided to blow the farm on nuclear investment instead of investing in efficiency and conservation. It simply recognized that prices were rising to a level that was politically dangerous for its continued existence.

Interestingly, in the media release the Liberals went on to say, "In order to have a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that includes renewables and creates jobs"—that's certainly not at the centre of this plan. The centre of this plan is nuclear power. It doesn't say that this plan, because it will drive up rates through an ill-conceived investment in nuclear power, will make electricity expensive and thus will undermine jobs in this province. It just says that its plan will include renewables and create jobs. Much reality is lost here through omission.

In the media release, the Liberals say, "Over the next five years, residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46%...." I have to say that, in talking to my constituents who saw the 10% and heard about the 46%, they were far more impressed with the 46% rise than the 10% cut. Maybe it's because they went to school here in Ontario and they learned math. Maybe it's because teachers kept them in class until they could do their subtraction and their addition. They realized that what was being promised to them was a very substantial increase in their electricity costs. That was not popular. So what we have is a botched job on electricity and we have doubtful numbers before us about the cost of the plan that has been presented by the government.

If you go back to the government's long-term energy plan and you ask about the numbers—the costs—the government, the Premier, cannot explain those numbers. Take a look at the performance of the Minister of Energy yesterday at his press conference when he introduced the new power plan. The reporter from CityPulse asked, "What about the cost of nuclear waste?" And I have to tell you, without doubt, the Minister of Energy—Minister, you looked very confused. Clearly, you had not thought a lot about that issue. You talked about it being a federal responsibility—some sort of federal committee.

Speaker, for your information and that of those who are watching, federal legislation requires Ontario to put money into waste disposal and it requires Ontario to

appoint members to the Nuclear Waste Management Organization board. The federal government's role is to set up the legislative framework; it is the province of Ontario and other nuclear jurisdictions that pay for that organization and appoint the directors. The minister should be well aware that a big chunk—in the billions of dollars—of debt that we're paying on the stranded debt and the billions that we continue to set aside for operation of our electricity system go to this waste. So when the reporter asked yesterday, "What about the cost of the waste?" the minister showed that he did not fully understand the scale of the problem and whose responsibility it was to deal with that.

The reporter from RDI—the CBC French service—asked the minister, "How is it that you are going to reduce the cost of peak power in time-of-use? Where is that reduction going to be paid for? Does that mean that the non-peak cost of power in people's homes is going to go up?"

I have to say, I thought I was in question period because the minister danced around it without answering. He was pretty good at it. He never touched down. One has to say it is impressive when you're asked a question and you never actually come close to the answer, and he didn't.

I would say that that question is one that's going to be addressed another day because, frankly, the way the Liberals have structured things, if you reduce the price here, you've got to raise the price over here. I look forward to hearing how that's all going to be balanced out.

Certainly this morning in question period, we got an opportunity to see the Premier check out or test out his talking points for the coming few months, and at the same time, we saw the Premier, who claimed that this long-term energy plan had all kinds of detailed answers, not able to answer some pretty fundamental questions about how things were costed and really how his government was going to make decisions.

This morning Andrea Horwath, leader of the NDP, asked: "My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the government announced that they will be 'proceeding with two new units at Darlington on a cost-effective basis.' How will the government determine what cost-effective is?"

That's not a complex question. One would think that the government, having published its 68-page plan, having engaged numerous bureaucrats over countless hours to pull together this plan, would be able to say,

"Yes, here's how we would determine what's cost-effective." But in an indication of either a lack of understanding of the issue before him or an indication that that particular point had not been addressed by his planners, he didn't answer that question in any way, shape or form. He went on about the virtues of nuclear. He went on about whether anyone else had a plan. But he didn't, in fact, answer a fundamental question about his plan.

When you have a large department, a Ministry of Energy, and when you have bodies like the Ontario Power Authority and Ontario Power Generation which engage fairly high-priced people who do this kind of planning, you should be able to answer how you determine whether or not something is cost-effective. The Premier could not do that this morning. The Premier tested out his lines for the next election, he tested out his lines for the next few months, but he couldn't answer a fundamental question about the plan that he has put forward.

Ms. Horwath came back again, saying, "Yesterday, the energy minister seemed to be pulling numbers out of thin air. But for families that were just told that they're going to be paying \$700 more a year for hydro within the next five years, this isn't make-believe. Who will be determining whether this government's nuclear plans are actually cost-effective, and when will they be doing that?"

That question wasn't that complex either because, generally speaking, you take this kind of plan to the Ontario Energy Board, witnesses are presented, witnesses are questioned and the OEB makes a ruling on the feasibility of the plan. The Premier could have given that answer, but he didn't. What he had to say was interesting: "We're doing whatever we can to place as much of the risk as we reasonably can on to those of the private sector." That was a great line. That was about as loose as it gets.

Speaker, in a very subtle way, you are indicating that I may be running short of time. I appreciate your subtlety and discretion. If indeed we're running short of time, I'm willing to stand down so that I can resume tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to the member for Toronto—Danforth. He could see that I had my trusty pocket watch out.

It is now 6 of the clock. This House is adjourned until Thursday, November 25, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 25 November 2010

Jeudi 25 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: When I left off yesterday, I'd been going through the responses of the Premier to questions about his long-term energy plan, because the realities of that long-term energy plan bear directly on this bill. They bear directly on the 10% reduction in electricity bills that will be financed by borrowing \$1 billion a year on the bond market, a matter of some consequence to the people of this province.

It was very clear from the Premier's comments in question period yesterday, when he said, "We're doing whatever we can to place as much of the risk as we reasonably can on to those of the private sector," that the Premier's previous position—and that of Ministers of Energy in various incarnations—had said, "No, we will no longer have the province of Ontario, the people of Ontario, on the hook for overruns." What the Premier said yesterday was that that principle had been abandoned and that in future they're going to try and cut a deal to reduce the risk, not eliminate it. But as you are well aware, Speaker, since every nuclear power project in Ontario has gone over budget and has come in behind schedule, these are very substantial risks, and there are consequences to the treasury of Ontario and consequences to the people of Ontario in the position that's been taken by the Premier.

The Premier talked about the thoughtful and responsible plan that had been put together but could not answer even some of the most basic and fundamental questions

about his plan when he was here in question period yesterday morning. That indicates either a secretiveness or a lack of thorough enough preparation and knowledge on the part of those who put together the plan.

He was asked again by Andrea Horwath, the leader of the Ontario NDP, about the realities of his plan: "The Premier may not want to answer these questions, but they matter to the people who will be stuck with the bill. The Bruce refurb has cost \$2.4 billion a unit so far and it's not complete yet. The government's new nuclear plan calls for 10 refurbished units. Where is the government's evidence that those 10 refurbished units will cost less than \$25 billion in total, and will it share that evidence with the people of Ontario?"

Now, the Premier could have answered that. He could have said, "Here are the numbers for this; here are the numbers for that." But instead of that, he went on to say, and this was fascinating to me, "There are some pretty significant cost overruns...." Yes, that's true, Premier, very significant cost overruns; cost overruns that, for the nuclear power plant in New Brunswick, led to a series of decisions that resulted in that government being defeated in the next election.

"There are some pretty significant cost overruns but, because of the contracts we've entered into, the private sector is responsible for all those overruns." Well, first of all, (a) that's not true, because the government of Ontario in fact agreed to take on a portion of those overruns; and (b) the simple reality is that last year Dalton McGuinty signed a sweetheart deal with Bruce Power to pay for power whether it was produced or not, resulting in a bill of about \$60 million. He effectively changed the floor price for power, giving Bruce Power a benefit that will run for a very long period of time. If that's protecting the people of Ontario from cost overruns, may there be mercy on us in the years to come, because that is no great protection.

It also raises the question: Will all future refurbishments be privatized in the way that the Bruce nuclear power station has been? Is that his plan for passing on that risk or part of that risk? There are more questions that are raised by the non-answers from the Premier than any answers given.

The other part of it all is to look at Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., the company that is backstopping all of this. Just this past summer, the Premier sent a little note of friendship to Prime Minister Harper asking for some mercy. Shawn McCarthy, *Globe and Mail*, Thursday, November 11 of this year: The headline reads, "Ontario Asked Ottawa to Delay AECL Sale." Mr. McCarthy

writes about a letter sent from the Premier to Prime Minister Harper: "The province wants Ottawa to help cover potential cost overruns of an AECL project, which could be substantial given that the company is offering a new generation of reactor technology that is still in the design stage."

It sounds to me like the risk isn't being passed on to the private sector. It sounds to me like the risk is being passed on to the public at the federal level. The Premier would like all of Canada to subsidize nuclear power here in Ontario. That's the substance of his letter to the Prime Minister.

The Premier asked that the sale of AECL be delayed. Mr. McCarthy reports: "Instead, the federal government has plowed ahead with its auction process, despite a lack of broad international interest in the bidding. Two companies have submitted formal offers: Montreal-based engineering giant SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. and Bruce Power...."

"However, those two bidders will not commit to financing completion of AECL's new advanced Candu...."

The future of the very technology that this government has been planning to incorporate into its power grid is in grave doubt. So, when you ask the Premier what this is going to cost, his guess is based on far more shaky hopes than we have seen in the past. His hopes are based on a wish that AECL will be there and will be subsidizing nuclear power, and I don't think that's a realistic wish anymore.

As reported by Mr. McCarthy, "Natural Resources Minister Christian Paradis said Wednesday that AECL's current operation is 'unsustainable' and that it is being restructured to diminish the burden" on Canadians. In that same article, Mr. McCarthy reports, "Industry sources say the province is going to have to accept some risk of cost overruns in order to conclude a reactor deal."

Well, that is consistent with the Premier's answer when he said he was going to try to move as much of the risk as he reasonably could. Once again, the Premier has backed off his commitment to protect Ontarians from cost overruns, and we all know how that plays out: Everyone who signs a cheque every month to pay their hydro bill and looks at that line "debt retirement charge" is paying for past nuclear failures. This government, this Premier, is committed to repeating history—and a very expensive history it is.

0910

I just note some of what's driving the federal government in its concern about AECL: That is that the federal government has had to allocate some \$1.6 billion to AECL over the last two years to cover costs of overruns—some \$446 million to cover cost overruns at its Candu refurbishment projects in New Brunswick, Ontario and South Korea. In fact, when that overrun comes along, it is the public treasury that is coughing up to cover that overrun.

My time remaining is short, so I'm going to move on to a second element in this particular bill. That is the changes related to worker safety, the WSIB. There are

many concerns from the injured worker community about the changes in this bill. As they say to me, the government is changing the existing funding principle which has been in place since 1915. It's a current account system, in which there has to be enough money to make payments as they become due, with a reserve specifically not required to be equal to full funding. The proposed system is a full funding system. That is to have enough money on hand to pay all future costs of all claims on the books. It sounds attractive, but it does pose very significant challenges and problems for employers: It may well cost more, and for injured workers it may well result in pressure to reduce their benefits.

The government is apparently pre-empting the WSIB funding review that it has announced with Professor Arthurs. The preferred route, the route suggested by injured workers, is to wait until after the funding review before taking action. But if the government decides to proceed with this legislation now, then the legislation needs to spell out that if funds are not sufficient, the board must raise rates paid by employers. At present, the wording reads that the new section 96.1 requires the board to "develop and implement a plan to achieve sufficiency that complies with the prescribed requirements." What can be in a plan that is serious about dealing with sufficiency besides the rates? What will be the other source of income, if it is not from the rates? If the government is serious about protecting injured workers, the only option to deal with the problem is to raise the rates, and this needs to be made very clear. Anything else will lead to interminable controversy every time the alarm bell goes off about "sufficiency." This may seem to be a minor amendment, but it could in fact signal a far more fundamental and potentially negative change in workers' compensation for injured workers. The government should be holding public hearings or waiting until the report of Arthurs's inquiry before introducing these changes.

I note that the changes in this bill appear to stem from the Auditor General's report—which was not only a numbers report but contained a very classic private insurance view of the funding of the public compensation system. The basic funding idea from the private insurance world is one that seeks to protect clients and investors in case of company failure. By law, private insurance companies need to be fully funded; that is, they must have sufficient funds in the bank to pay all their clients for future benefits in case they go out of business. I need to point out that the WCB—WSIB—was set up in 1913 to run like a public system and not have all the funds in the bank, as the system was not set up to fail. It has withstood the test of the Great Depression; it has withstood storms since then. The Ontario WCB has never been fully funded and is funded at about 50%, which is a higher ratio in the bank versus future liabilities than the Canada pension plan, a plan which is funded at about 26%. It's called steady-state funding, and no one is in a panic over that.

The legislation calls for "sufficient" funds rather than full funding. The Ministry of Labour will say that it

allows the parties to define what it is, but the basic idea is the same: Run the ship like a private insurance company.

Justice and fairness to injured workers will inevitably be pitted against the competitive employer rate argument. This has negative implications for injured workers, who were promised a system of justice and fairness in exchange for the right to sue. It's a fundamental change, and there need to be hearings on this. I know that we will have committee hearings on this bill, and it's my hope that the voices of injured workers are heard very clearly in pressing forward what they see as necessary amendments to this bill.

The last public study on unfunded liability was done by a Professor Weiler in 1980. Wheeler said he didn't like employers putting all the money in the workers' compensation board coffers for all future costs when they might like to keep it and use it for investments.

The government and WSIB have just announced a public inquiry into board funding issues called the funding review, headed by Professor Harry Arthurs. It's looking into this issue, a complex one, and I think this government would be well served by waiting to hear the commentary from its panel before it made final decisions; at the very least, on any regulations that would flow from this legislation.

I will wrap up now and I look forward to questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the member from Danforth speaking yesterday and today about the fall economic statement, about the bill, about his suggestions for changes and amendments to the bill. Of course, it's always never enough. I have a great respect for the member from the NDP when he speaks; I know he comes with a lot of numbers and figures.

But we are more realistic on this side of the House. We talk about the reality of the economy and the reality of the future of this province; about how we can fix energy in the province of Ontario; how we can fix labour relationships in the province of Ontario; how we can look at the future of the province of Ontario; how we can invest in our education system in the province of Ontario; how we can maintain health care in the public domain and keep it accessible for all; how we can look after the vulnerable people among us. No doubt about it, there's going to be a lot of criticism from the other side of the House about whatever we do not being enough. Whatever we do is wrong, in their opinion.

But as a matter of fact, due to the economic circumstances in Canada, North America and the whole world, I believe we're doing excellently. We're performing more than any other nation on this planet. I would invite my colleague on the opposite side to go look and compare us to Ireland, compare us to England, compare us to Greece, compare us to Portugal, Spain, Italy, and to the United States, our neighbour to the south. Then see what we are doing and how we are performing in the province of Ontario, all of it because we have a plan.

We have a vision for the future, because we calculate every step we take in the province of Ontario. That's why we are proud—I'm proud, particularly—to be in a government that has a plan for a bright future, that believes in the people of Ontario and believes in our ability to continue to be prosperous in the province of Ontario.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I particularly came this morning because I wanted to hear the final remarks from the member from Toronto–Danforth. He was consistent. I would say that on the nuclear file we probably disagree, but he understands that the government on the other side of the House has lost its way on this file. We can't trust—this is the main issue about this debate. When I look at the very name of the bill, the cynical name, the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, this is shifting the blame onto the people they're supposed to be representing, as if they're responsible for the smart-meter mess up and for the unexpected increases in costs of the HST and that. This bill sums it up well; it's got 21 different tables.

I generally have a lot of sympathy or at least appreciation for the perspective of the member from Toronto–Danforth, but we know, and have known for about 30 years, that nuclear is the baseload of electricity supply for Ontario. I'm proud to represent an area, the riding of Durham in the region of Durham, specifically the Darlington plant but also, respectfully, the Pickering plant. It's been operated safely without event for many years. In fact, it should be remembered that under our government, we refurbished a portion of the Pickering plant at great expense, I might add, but nonetheless providing safe, reliable, predictable forms of energy. They seem to forget that when the blackout happened, it was the northeast United States and a failure in its distribution and transmission system. I would say now that if they are promising to close coal plants anymore, you know they're not telling you the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: As always, it was really interesting to listen to my colleague from Toronto–Danforth. If there is somebody in this House who knows a thing or two about the environment and who knows the energy file it's the member from Toronto–Danforth. His background certainly speaks for itself. He has been committed to the environment through his entire career. You cannot separate the energy file from the environment file. The two are linked so closely together.

Nobody disagrees that the use of coal-fired generators has a tremendous, horrific, detrimental effect on the health of the people around those generating stations. Our chief medical officer of health and the people before her certainly have documented the ill effects they bring on the people, especially on the respiratory system, and then it spreads to the entire body. The damage we're doing to the people of Ontario can actually be costed out to \$2.7

billion to \$3.5 billion in health costs that we can link directly to the use of coal generating stations that do nothing for the environment and nothing for the people who live close by.

Our member talks about the way to bring forward renewable energy that people need and to do this in a clean, green, healthy way. I think we should listen to what he had to say. The NDP had a plan to take the HST off your hydro bill. You just put it on a couple of months ago. It adds a burden that a lot of families are not able to shoulder. Why didn't you just take that off?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the couple of minutes available to respond in part to the member from Toronto–Danforth. Before I do that, I really have to respond to the two-minute response of the member from Durham. I'm hopeful—I'm optimistic—that his leader will get a copy of Hansard and be able to read what the member from Durham, who said he represents the Darlington plant area, said.

He talks about the base nuclear load, which he said before in this place is reliable, safe and ultimately cost-effective—I'm not sure he used that word, but I know he has in the past. And I agree with him; it is an important part of our baseload. He spoke about the refurbishment of the Pickering plant and the expenditure. I was the mayor when that process started, and it was so sorely underestimated by the government of the day. I think they estimated \$800 million to do two reactors, and my recollection is that it was probably in the neighbourhood of \$2.4 billion to do one reactor. So they certainly didn't get the costing right.

But I'm hoping his leader has the chance, because they don't have a plan. It's a plan-free zone, I think the terminology is; a plan-free zone. He has laid out the first part of their plan, and I'm hoping that his leader has a chance to read Hansard, because it's an important part of the plan. I hope they can put a cost on that part of their plan and maybe flesh it out a little bit along the way, because currently, they've got an absence of a plan. It's a plan-free zone they live in across there.

I think that two minutes was very well spent this morning by the member from Durham, and I know his leader is going to take the opportunity to read Hansard carefully and use that as a fundamental basis for starting to develop a plan so that the debate we have here can be about alternatives—not just about complaining, but putting forward real alternatives as part of the debate.

I apologize for not having spent the time I should have on the member from Toronto–Danforth's speech, but I felt, for my purpose and my needs in Pickering, that this was an important part of the debate this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from London–Fanshawe, Durham, Nickel Belt and Pickering–Scarborough East for commenting on my remarks this morning.

I'm going to go back to the member from London–Fanshawe, with his statement that what we have before us is a realistic plan. Then I'll contrast that with the comments from the member from Pickering–Scarborough East, who noted the increase in cost for nuclear refurbishment going from \$800 million to \$2.4 billion.

This government has said that \$33 billion will be the cost of the nuclear core of its electricity plan. The history of nuclear power in Canada—not just here in Ontario, but also in New Brunswick—is a history of costs doubling, sometimes going higher than that; it is a history of overruns and expense far beyond those that were ever recognized by those who started the plan.

This Premier, this Premier here, has decided that he will gamble the future of Ontario's economy, he will gamble the future of Ontario's public sector treasury on a technology that has already badly burdened this province financially once. That was not enough. Apparently, we put our hands on the hot stove element, we got burned, we didn't notice and we decided to do it again. That's what he's planning to do here.

When the member from London–Fanshawe says that this plan is realistic, he needs to ask his Premier what his numbers are based on, because even the Premier, apparently, can't give that answer when asked in this chamber. A realistic plan is able to explain where the numbers come from; this one isn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'll be sharing my time this morning with my colleague the member from York West. But first of all, I'd like to wish my wife, who is a vice-principal at St. Catherine's in Peterborough—today is our 16th wedding anniversary. I did—

Mr. Mario Sergio: Sixty?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Sixteen, not 60. Holy smokes, I'd be getting a scroll from the Premier, my friend from York West. We look forward to a little celebration a little later today.

One of the most important parts of Bill 135—and I think it's something that all of us in this House should take a very close look at—is the changes that we're going to make to the Ontario Securities Commission here in Ontario.

I'd like to start off by quoting Howard Wetston, who appeared in front of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies on November 2, 2010. He recently was appointed chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. He said, "The evolution of the capital markets also reinforces that now, more than ever, we must reform our system of regulation by supporting the implementation of a national securities regulator. I am committed to supporting the Ontario government, the Canadian Securities Transition Office and participating provincial regulators to make this important goal a reality."

That is a very fundamental part of Bill 135, and let me tell you why. Every pension plan in Ontario and, indeed, throughout Canada—many of those defined benefit plans and those defined contribution plans have a base of their

revenue in stock portfolios. One of the things we noted some two years ago, when there was this meltdown of world financial markets that started south of the border—indeed the \$40-billion bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers certainly indicated the need, through the trading of derivatives, the trading of sub-prime mortgages—was the need to certainly bring in new regulations to control the securities market here in Ontario, and both nationally and indeed internationally. All of us are very dependent on having oversight of the security regulation market, and this is a very important aspect of this bill.

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I note that, interestingly enough, some two years ago there was a report in the financial section of the *Globe and Mail* talking about the Central Bank of Iceland that went broke. When they reviewed the capital base of the Central Bank of Iceland, they discovered that it was totally made up of American sub-prime mortgages that that central bank had bought 15 and 20 times down the road. We all know what a house of cards that was.

I'm also concerned—it goes back to the previous government, the previous finance minister, Mr. Flaherty, who is now the federal finance minister. He was very supportive then of having a national securities regulator—the right thing to do. It is certainly the position of this government that there is a need to have a national securities regulator. That would certainly be in everybody's interest, to do that. If I was providing any advice to the Prime Minister on this particular area, I would suggest that he move unilaterally to set up a national securities regulator. I certainly read with interest this morning a headline from the *Globe and Mail* on the western Premiers—Mr. Stelmach, and Mr. Wall of Saskatchewan. The title is “Premiers Push Back Against National Securities Regulator Plan.” I have concerns when I read that, because I think all of us in this House should join together and support the federal government and support the province of Ontario to move ahead in this particular area.

I want to touch upon the energy part of this bill. It has a great impact in my riding of Peterborough. GE in Peterborough has a unique partnership with Hitachi. It employs 500 employees at their operation in Peterborough. We're part of Team Candu and AECL. Let me give a bit of history of what happened. When the Avro Arrow project was cancelled in 1959, about half of that engineering group went south of the border—they joined the American space program, NASA; they were instrumental in putting the Americans on the moon—and of the other half, of course, many of them actually ended up in Peterborough. They joined GE during the early stages of developing the first robotic application—it was designed right in Peterborough—which was the fuelling machine for the Candu reactor. It is unique in its design internationally. It is the only fuelling machine that can take the spent bundles out and put new ones in without shutting down the operation, which is unique to the Candu design. Beyond that, that engineering group of course designed the bundles that are used, and on any given day

50% of our generating capacity in the province of Ontario is from our nuclear generators. In fact, the member from Durham is right: Darlington operates today at about 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, which is one of the most efficient nuclear producers in North America.

There's always talk about Darlington, and the cost overruns in Darlington. Let's put that in perspective, too. The Darlington project was stop-start, stop-start on three different occasions. Also, during that period of time, the financing of Darlington went up to 21%. So when you start peeling away, like an onion, the costs associated with Darlington, you have to take into consideration that it did stop-start three times, and interest rates to finance that particular project ballooned to 21%. You have to put that in perspective.

I am concerned that the federal government is contemplating selling a portion of AECL, because indeed it is a unique Canadian technology. I would ask the federal government to show the same consistency with AECL that they showed towards the Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan. They decided it was in the national interest that that acquisition by a foreign company shouldn't go forward, and I would ask them sincerely to apply the same test to AECL.

We hear a lot of talk in this chamber about electricity costs, and I have my own bill from my home in Peterborough. We have a very modest home. We have energy-efficient appliances, and I volunteered some two years ago to the Peterborough Utility Services to be a part of their pilot for a smart meter and load-limiter. So I went into PUS in Peterborough to look at my bill from a year ago October; that would be October 2009. Back in October 2009, I used approximately 690 kilowatt hours, and I could give you the breakdown of that usage. We had 91 kilowatt hours at 9 cents; we had 431 kilowatt hours at off-peak, at 4.2 cents; and we had mid-peak, at 7.6 cents. With the GST included and the wheeling charges of \$27, our bill was \$79.50. I looked at our bill from October of this year. Our bill was \$93.72. When you factor in the HST, the difference year over year was a meagre \$8.17, and I can give you the background on that. We had on-peak use at 9 cents, we had off-peak use at 0.3 cents and mid-peak use at 8 cents.

When we hear some of the bills, some of the numbers that have been thrown around this House, I would say that people should sit down and take a look at their bills. The executive director of the Peterborough Utility Services in Peterborough, Mr. Doran, indicated to me that you may want to look at those bills. It may be the situation for people who haven't paid their bills for a considerable number of months that they've had to restart their electrical service, and those costs have to be taken into consideration. But for my own bill, year over year, the difference is a meagre \$8.17.

I'd like to also get on the record, from Hansard back on November 27, 2002, a question about green energy and conservation from my friend—the riding's name was then York North—Ms. Munro:

“My question is for the Minister of Energy. We've heard from people across the province that the govern-

ment's recent announcement to lower electricity rates and provide rebates for consumers is exactly the kind of relief they were looking for. Obviously, this has been the focus of a great deal of media attention. But people may be less familiar with some of the other important aspects of the government's action plan.

"Minister, could you please tell us what the government is doing to promote green energy and conservation?"

I will give you the answer of the esteemed Mr. Baird on that occasion:

"Our government is committed to the promotion of green energy and conservation. This Friday I'll be in Huron county with my colleague Helen Johns, the Minister of Agriculture, where we'll open the first commercial wind farm in Ontario. This wind farm will generate enough electricity in the province to meet the annual needs of about 3,000 homes with green electricity. That's good news for Ontario and good news for the environment.

"We all believe we should have a commitment to promoting green energy. That's why the government has accepted the challenge and a set of targets to show provincial leadership by targeting to buy 20% of its electricity from green sources. I think that's good news." I agree it's good news. "We've also introduced some really substantial tax incentives to try to promote both energy conservation and clean, green and renewable energy in Ontario."

I can tell you, I agree with Mr. Baird. He couldn't have said it any better than that.

I want to leave some time for my friend from York West.

Some of the other, I believe, important parts of this particular fall economic statement: We continue with our permanent income tax cuts, that being for the 2010 tax year, taxes reduced by \$200 on average for 93% of Ontario's income tax payers; the elimination of the Ontario personal income tax for about 90,000 lower-income taxpayers; sales tax relief for about 3.1 million individuals and families through the Ontario sales tax credit. This credit, which would begin to be paid quarterly in August 2010, will provide up to \$260 of relief per person per year and up to \$1,040 for a family of four.

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I want to spend a little bit of time on the deficit challenge. There's no question the words are quite accurate. When the federal finance minister, Mr. Flaherty, who served with distinction in this House for many years, looked at the federal deficit being in the neighbourhood of \$50 billion, he certainly said there are challenges that all governments face in order to reduce their deficit. But we are living, I think people can say, in some very extraordinary or challenging times.

Back in 2007 none of us would have anticipated that General Motors and Chrysler would be put to the brink. We had to provide them with \$4 billion in assistance. In my particular case General Motors represents about 25% of the economic activity in my riding of Peterborough, between retired workers from General Motors and active

workers for General Motors. Indeed, we were quite fortunate that most of the GM employees in my riding were employed in the car plant. We also have a number of manufacturers that supply General Motors each and every day. When I looked at the challenges, the choice to support 25% of my economy had to be the top priority as the MPP for the riding of Peterborough. What that meant was that \$4 billion was going to be added to our deficit. We are getting some of that money back; General Motors has provided some payments up front. They just recently issued their IPO, which has been successful. We look forward to recouping those dollars that we invested, certainly, in General Motors and, down the road, the dollars that we'll get back from Chrysler.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, and I know it has had a great impact on your riding of Brant: We had to take \$7 billion to invest in infrastructure. Most economists here in Ontario, and indeed around Canada, indicated that that investment in infrastructure is indeed very important. It provides the building blocks for a modern, successful economy. But we had to borrow money to do that, to inject that money into the economy to build airports, to build bridges, to build community centres and other things that will provide Ontario with that base to move forward in the future. I think that is pretty important.

When you peel back the \$4 billion that we put into General Motors, the money that we invested in infrastructure, though it increased the deficit, I think everybody recognizes that that was the right thing to do. We now need to move on to the next step with an orderly way to start paying down the deficit that we indeed face in Ontario. For every billion dollars we reduce in the deficit, it reduces our interest costs by \$50 million.

I'll now turn it over to my friend from York West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Levac): The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I have to say, you look very nice in that chair, very nice. Congratulations. I hope this becomes a more often and perhaps permanent position.

I want to add a few comments on the so-called Bill 135. It's nothing more than the 2010 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review. In the last couple of days, full of debates, we heard a lot about our energy plan and support. I have to say with all due respect, that the more I hear about it, the more I dwell on it, the more I can sense that our Premier is on track, is right. Not only the Premier himself, but the Minister of Finance, when he says that, yes, it is going to cost us more, but in the long run, we are going to gain economically, both as a province and the people of Ontario as well.

As well, I have to agree with the Minister of Energy when he says that the people are with us. The more we talk about it, the more I think the people understand that it is the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do for now and for the long term.

If we look at the past, what happened in our province, a lot of the evils we are dealing with today, evils we and the Premier had to deal with in the last seven years, are

because of what has not been done in past years—not only what should have been done, but the little bit that has been done was done in the wrong way.

You want to hear something really interesting? Speak to the local municipalities. They will tell you about the problems that we have created as a government when the various cuts took place to practically everything, from social services to housing to infrastructure—all the assistance that is vital to our local municipalities.

When we come to the seven years of this government, if we put on the table all the many things that the government has delivered, I think we should be very proud. We should deliver to the people of Ontario the good things that we have been doing, because in everything we have done, we didn't close schools, we didn't close hospitals, we created new jobs, and we are at peace with our schools. We did this in a very unexpected time, but we are managing, and as the Premier often says, we have recouped 75% of the jobs lost. At the same time, we have given—which I am in full support of—our seniors, on an annual basis, almost \$1,100 in rebates and grants to assist them with the cost of rising utilities. We have cut taxes for 93% of our people, or 9 out of 10. I think they will realize that when the time comes to file their income tax. I think we should be very much aware, on a daily basis, of what we have been doing now as a government versus the others.

I have to say this: When they talk about the good times, we had some good times, but we had some terrible times. We had a recession that nobody foresaw. When I look at the previous government, they enjoyed some of the best years of economic growth that our province has ever seen, and what did we see? We saw cuts all over the place, especially to services, closing schools, closing hospitals, firing nurses, firing doctors. We didn't do that, and we went through a very bad economic period as well.

I think when we dwell on the energy crisis, let me say that when our small business people and our industries open up the door and turn on the switch to start production, the power is there. It's important for them, and it's important for us, because they start producing, and they start selling.

It's good for them, it's good for our province, and it's good for the people of Ontario. So I hope the opposition will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I didn't want to be disruptive, so I was watching the member from Peterborough outside in the anteroom here, and I wasn't impressed. I'll say that respectfully. The member from Peterborough works hard, but the real issue here is that I'm disappointed he didn't speak at all about the changes in schedule 21, which are changes to the WSIB.

This is important. There are really two parts to it: Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. It's insurance for health care. It's private insurance for health care; that's what it is, because if you fall off a ladder at work, the company pays through insurance, and the hospital is re-

imbursed through an insurance company. So it's private health insurance.

Let's be clear. We're all saying, "Oh, this health care." It's insurance, as is auto insurance for personal accident and injury. It's insurance. It's private insurance that pays for health care, so don't let the consumers of Ontario be misguided about what's happening.

What's happening in this schedule 21? Most members have not read it, and I'm so disappointed. They don't even understand it. This is what surprises me. Members here who are elected to represent the people have no clue what's in it. This section here underlies the—it absolves the province. Premier McGuinty is now absolved of any responsibility for fully funding WSIB.

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The WSIB, the insurance board, has—it makes me so sad—\$12 billion of debt. It's a liability. They don't have enough money to pay for all of the injuries or compensation for people who can no longer work. There's a section in his response I wanted to reply to, because there are two parts to the liability, in that it's the future benefits provision that needs to be present and future benefits that need to be protected. Let's respond to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is rather refreshing to see you in this chair. Congratulations.

The comments from the member from Peterborough: He started his comments talking about the security change. People have to realize that the Ontario Securities Commission didn't see fit to regulate this market, because they said, "Those are sophisticated investors who deal in derivatives, and those are complicated financial instruments. Therefore, we don't need to regulate them because they are sophisticated." Unfortunately, this did not serve the people of Ontario well, and although the bank has really pushed back hard about this, they now seem a whole lot more co-operative and Ontario is moving forward.

I was in an Ontario-Quebec intergovernmental meeting last weekend, and I can tell you that from the Quebec government, they are really trying to position themselves as the province that will be dealing in the derivatives. The work that Ontario is doing is really at the forefront. How this battle will end up, I'm not too sure, but I think, as with many things that the government does, we will know more because the devil will be in the details. How much control will we have? How much transparency will we have? We will only find that out once the regulations are rolled out. We're dealing with a bill here. We're dealing at the 40,000-foot level. We don't really know what it will look like on the ground, and we won't know this until the regulations have rolled out.

As far as his hydro bill, I'm really happy to see that he was able to keep his hydro in around the \$70- to \$93-a-month range. That's still \$20 up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'm very pleased to be able to stand up to speak to Bill 135, and certainly as it

relates to the economic outlook that we have at this point in time.

I can honestly say that for myself, as a member, I have sort of a built-in focus group as to what's happening at the constituent level. When you have five children who parent your 13 grandchildren, you know what is happening in their lives in the day-to-day and the kinds of worries they have, the kinds of bills they're faced with, the issues around the economy, the insecurity around jobs, sometimes. My children have what most people would consider to be jobs of the type that—some are working in developmental services; I have a son-in-law who's a truck driver. They work in the same kinds of work that most Ontarians do. They're hard-working and they have their struggles, but they also have their enjoyments. It's important for us as a government to make sure that we recognize that.

Going through the economic statement that we have recognizes that these people are trying to get through what is the end of a recession in this province. As we move forward, the insecurity is still there, and they reflect that to me as I listen to what they're talking about and the things that they're dealing with. That's why we have things such as the Ontario clean energy benefit, which is 10% on their energy bill. Those are things that will help them to make the transition, because we recognize that the cost of energy is going to continue to go up. That is a reality of our lives. What we need to do is to help them make that transition, and that benefit will do exactly that.

Those are the kinds of things we are looking at, but we're also being very honest and very realistic about what the future holds for people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm going to have an opportunity in a couple of minutes to make a few comments on Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. It's one of those omnibus bills, and it brought in the so-called discount on hydro. I look forward to talking about that for a while, because I'm very curious about the comments and the questions coming back from the Premier, in his response to our questions, on whether or not the official opposition and the third party have any energy plans for the province of Ontario. It will be interesting to delve into that a little bit more. I'm really curious to see what the actual energy plan is for this government, because it's been nothing but a bunch of floundering and flip-flopping for seven years, going back to the days of David Peterson when he completely destroyed the nuclear system, and here they've carried on over and over and over—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Isn't it incredible? You say one thing and the Minister of Agriculture has to yap away like usual. I sat quietly through her speech, and what do we have? We have this heckling and garbage going on from the other side, because you say, "This party has absolutely no energy plan," and they try to speak as though this particular government, the official opposition—

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Here they are yapping away. Isn't that an embarrassment? Because, you know what? They're going down and they know it, and they're desperate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Peterborough has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I do want to thank the members from Durham, Nickel Belt, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and indeed Simcoe North.

I have spent a lot of time analyzing the part of the bill that deals with derivatives and the Ontario Securities Commission, because that's part of my background and something that I'm very interested in. I happen to think it is a very important thing that we have to do.

Over the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Stop the clock. I'd just ask everybody to settle down, please.

Honourable member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, I'm now taking the opportunity to go through schedule 21. Changes to the WSIB are part of this Bill 135, and a very important piece.

I can say to my good friend from Simcoe North, when I get educated about the nuclear industry, I go to the experts in Peterborough. They've been involved in Candu since 1952. We have one of the greatest collections of engineering talent of any community in Canada with regards to nuclear development in fuelling machines, in bundle development, and indeed design. That's recognized; all members of the House, I think, will recognize that work.

I take the opportunity to sit down with Peter Mason, who's the vice-president of nuclear development for GE Canada. He's involved with their partner, Hitachi. They bring me in, they brief me, and they give the insight—the practical insight, not the rhetoric but the practical insight—into Ontario's and Canada's nuclear industry and how they're positioning it going forward, the development of the ACR-1000, which is the next generation of the Candu reactor.

So I invite my colleagues any time: If they wanted to come, I'd set up a briefing and go through the details as it relates to Canada's nuclear industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I will be in Peterborough, door knocking for our Conservative candidate, so I may drop over and see you at some point, because that's a riding we plan on winning.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Oh, Garfield.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Here we go; the heckling begins again. Isn't it amazing? You come into the House to debate a bill, and all they want to do is yell and scream at you and heckle you, because you want to make a few comments that they don't like to hear about.

I'm happy to speak to Bill 135 for a while, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. I think the funniest thing about this bill is the short title of it. I think it's something like Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibility Act, 2010. Well, I'll tell you, that's quite a name for this bill. It's obviously an omnibus bill, and it brings together 21 separate bills that we deal with.

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I'd like to concentrate a little bit on the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010, and the 10% reduction in electricity costs over five years. That alone is very, very misleading, just in the title of itself, because we know that energy rates are going up dramatically, and at the end of the day, they're going to give you an invoice or your bill will come in the mail and it will say "less 10%." You add 30% or 40% on, and we're going to see 10% come off the bottom, and that's going to be the Dalton McGuinty benefit.

I heard the member from Peterborough mention his bill. Are there a lot of people getting bills with only \$6 or \$7 more?

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'll tell you, that's not what we're hearing. You know what? We're not hearing that at all. Senior citizens are coming to me, and they're saying to me, "Garfield, what am I going to do? I can no longer live in this house. I'm afraid of the future. I've watched the taxes. I've watched the harmonized sales tax. I've watched all these new taxes, all these crazy additions on the bills, the plan they have," and they're afraid of their hydro bill. They're afraid for the future.

I'd love a copy of that bill, and I'm going to show people. I'm going to say, "This is what Mr. Leal is getting in the city of Peterborough." His is only eight bucks a month—what?—\$100 a year; only \$8 a year—

Mr. Jeff Leal: No. I said October 2009 and October 2010—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Fine. I'd love to have it, because I'll send some other ones back to you from other people.

As soon as we bring up energy in this House—now, they've obviously had their caucus meeting and got their messaging out that, "We're not going to answer any questions, because we're going to say to the official opposition and to the third party, 'Where's your plan?'" First of all, we don't have to have a plan right now; our plan will be in our platform. You're the government. You're the ones who are supposed to have the plan. You're not supposed to be questioning whether we have a plan. Where's your plan, plain and simple?

Let's talk about your plan. Let's go back to 2003.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, can you do something about the noise in here, particularly the Minister of Agriculture? Maybe you should worry about the Ministry of Agriculture instead of heckling me. You've got a few problems in that ministry.

Let's talk about the plan. When I remember 2003, Dalton McGuinty promised, "I'm going to close all the

coal-fired generation in Ontario by 2007." I remember watching him on Steve Paikin, and Steve Paikin was making a mockery of him on the show. He said, "Mr. Premier, in 2007, would that be near the beginning of the year or would that be near the end of the year?" And the Premier thought for a few minutes and said, "Mr. Paikin, I think it's going to have to be near the end of the year 2007." That bought him eight or nine or 10 months, but he never did close any coal-fired generation. Elizabeth Witmer's plan for the Lakeview generating station was the one that came into place, and that was actually closed. Of course, they took credit for it and never gave a word of good praise to the work done by Minister Witmer. But that's what we found. So that was the beginning of the Liberal energy plan: to make a mistake by three years, and now I believe they're at 2014 or 2015 or 2016, and they're probably going to get them all closed down.

The one thing they've never explained to me in their energy plan was the emissions from the United States, where there are over 300 new, clean, coal-fired generating stations, and the prevailing winds do come this way. I'm wondering what the impact is of the United States of America coal-fired generating plants, what their emissions are and what the impact would be on the air in the province of Ontario, and in fact, in Canada, because the wind does blow up. The last time I looked, there wasn't a wall there. The winds actually had to go through the air, and they could deposit the emissions. We haven't seen that impact, and that has been very discouraging to me, because they continue in every answer to talk about, "Well, you Tories believe in clean coal, which is dirty, dirty, dirty. And you know what? We believe in clean air for our kids." But they never talk about the impact of the United States on this particular subject.

Then they went into the planning around how do you implement clean energy: solar and wind? Well, the first thing you do is make sure that the municipalities have absolutely no say. You let these projects go between the Ontario Power Authority and basically companies that are from Korea and the Far East—that's who's making the real profits out of the clean energy program—putting them wherever they want, with secret deals on farmland etc. That's the way it's been in Simcoe county: No one knows where they were until they popped up one day and said, "Oh, by the way, we've got an agreement on that particular farm right there, and you know what? There's going to be 185 acres of solar panels. That's really bad farmland"—it's only been farmed for 150 years, but it's bad farmland; it's class 3 or 4—"so we're going to allow you to put it on there." None of the neighbours know about it, none of the council members know about it, so they have a public meeting.

Now, the public meeting's a bit of a joke. A snake oil salesman from the company comes up and he says, "Well, you know what? This is all good. There are not going to get any negative impacts. We're here for 25 years. Goodbye. Leave us alone."

I understand now, with how shaky this government is, that all those companies are now very, very concerned about their future in Ontario, because if another govern-

ment comes in, they may want more accountability around the solar farms and wind generation here in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yeah. Jeez, boy. Yeah, you should worry more about the beef farmers and the hog farmers than about coal-fired, okay? Don't worry about our—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I just want to remind members to speak through the Chair and stop picking on each other.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm trying to speak through the Chair, Mr. Speaker, but I can hardly talk to you because of the noise coming over from the other side about their so-called plan.

So we're talking about some wonderful things now: their clean air program, which has no study on the impact from the United States; and their new plans for windmills and solar panels.

I get a kick out of the windmills. So much emphasis has been put on the wind generation. Can you tell me why, when the wind gets too strong or there's too high-powered a wind, they stop? They stop; they don't work under high winds. You'd think that wind generation would go faster and faster and create more and more power, but it doesn't. And of course we know that the solar panels are very, very ineffective most of the time. On a day like today, when it's cloudy outside, the percentage of power they produce is down as well.

But they're putting their savings on that. They're depending the future of this government on solar-powered generation and wind generation, and that's going to be the backbone of their energy plan. But what they forgot to tell everybody, and what the average person doesn't know, is that when you're paying 35 or 40 cents a kilowatt hour, or you're paying 58 or 60 or 80 cents a kilowatt hour for solar, it's the average hydro user who picks up the difference. They pick it up on their bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Absolutely, and that's every little guy. I'm surprised your bill isn't higher with that.

But I can tell you, that's where it's going to happen. When this all gets into place, all those proceeds, all those profits are going to be going to companies in—for example, Sharp industries have bought the renewable solar projects from California, placing 20 separate projects, I think, in the province of Ontario. They've now bought that for \$350 million and they're heading over to—those profits are going back to Sharp industries, which is based out of the Far East. Our people, here in the province of Ontario—although some may be manufactured here; there might be the odd solar panel built here or there might be some blades of the windmills built here—the proceeds from the people getting the 80 cents a kilowatt hour are actually in other countries. That's what I don't like about this. And I really don't like the fact that our municipal councils haven't had any say, no say at all in this.

They're being pushed through, as we know. When we went back to the Green Energy Act, one of the things that

happened right here in my riding—in the riding of Simcoe North, we had one of the first companies come forward and tell the mayor—they did tell the mayor in this case, but there was no planning program; on the biggest farm in Oro-Medonte, they wanted to put 235 acres of solar panels, until the people were outraged and said, "What's this all about? We don't know anything about this." And then we said, "It's class 1 farmland." So at least our caucus went to the committee hearings and stressed the fact to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture etc. that these shouldn't be going on class 1 farmland, class 2 farmland and, in fact, the upper five categories of farmland. But in the end, they caved and they only said class 1 and 2. We all know that Canadian Soil's inventory maps are not accurate because they're far outdated, and the reality is that many of the lands that they are putting the solar power generation on are very, very good farmland.

1010

I'm very, very disappointed, as a former municipal councillor and as a member of this assembly, that we do not have the backing and the support of the political process that allows for a rezoning. You have to remember: This is manufacturing, this is an industry, and when you take farmland without any kind of an official plan amendment or any kind of a zoning bylaw, you're allowed to go into a complete different use of land. That infuriates the general public. It certainly is not good for our municipal councillors, because I can tell you right now, they still get the letters and they still get the concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I can't remember: Do we adjourn at 10:20 or 10:15?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): At 10:15.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I know you really want to hear me next week as well.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes, so I want to continue on here.

We go back to the government's plan. I guess, somewhere, there is a plan, but no one has actually seen what the plan is—their energy plan. The latest thing is, when the pressure got on the government, they said, "We've got to do something. People are outraged over these hydro bills. Let's give them a cut of 10%." So in comes this bill as part of an omnibus bill.

What they're probably going to do—there are probably some things in here that we like in this bill, Bill 135, but there's things we hate about this. So you're going to force us probably to vote against this. Then you'll go around saying, "You know what? They voted against it. That bad official opposition voted against it."

But you know what? I thought it almost humorous that the Liberal plan now is to say to the official opposition, "Where is your plan? Where is your plan?" Believe me, guys, we've got 10 months before the election; you will see our plan. Do you think we're going to give you the date it's coming out? We're not going to do that. You will see: The people of Ontario will have a comprehensive energy strategy coming from this party, and they will have a comprehensive tax strategy coming from this

party as well. We'll develop that, and that's what we'll sell to the people of Ontario next fall.

The reality in the province—you all know. I think you've all been in Santa Claus parades, and everybody did the Remembrance Day circuit here a few weeks ago, with all the different events. I think a lot of you probably know that your government is not a very popular government anymore. The varnish has worn off, and you know what? People are very, very upset and discouraged, and they just do not have—the working families in the province of Ontario can't afford a Dalton McGuinty government. They're not asking for sex education in the classroom. They're not asking for that for kindergarten and grade 1 students. No one is asking for that. But you did a flip-flop on that. And then, because Tim Hudak agreed with mixed martial arts and thought it would be good for the economy, good for businesses, good for people with restaurants and bars—they were absolutely opposed to this. Dalton McGuinty said that there will not be any mixed martial arts. And then, all of a sudden, out he comes and suddenly he agrees with mixed martial arts. The list goes on and on and on.

But you know what? The best list of all is the list going back to September 13, 2003. When Dalton McGuinty said to Ontario citizens—does anybody remember this, when he signed the Taxpayer Protection Act? Does anybody remember that? We've got copies of it; we've got pages of it. It's nice stuff for a future election. Mr. Speaker, do you remember what he said? The Speaker doesn't even want to look at me. He said, "I will not raise your taxes." Remember that? Dalton actually said that to the general public: "I will not raise your taxes." Then he followed through with the health premium—it's \$1,000 minimum—very shortly after that, and then he brought in the harmonized sales tax. Unbelievable.

I'll finish off next week when we go back to this. I'll finish off this debate and look forward to having you all back to hear my final comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I understand that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear white ribbons in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: They're not here yet, but today I'm expecting the arrival from Bowmanville High School

of David Rempel and a grade 10 class. Welcome to Queen's Park whenever you arrive.

Mr. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce two outstanding members and residents of Mississauga South, Ron Olson and Mike Moorcroft. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to welcome my guests from the Ontario Genomics Institute to Queen's Park. I would also like to encourage everyone to attend Genomics in the Park, taking place in room 230 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. today after question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today the Consul General of the Kingdom of Spain at Toronto, Mr. Francisco Pascual de la Parte. Please join me in welcoming our guest today. Consul General, welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Premier. This Tuesday, the Ontario PCs showed that Premier McGuinty is not keeping to the caps for salaries of 367 senior bureaucrats in the Ontario public service. He is also not keeping to the wage restraint plan he said was necessary to balance the budget. The media has reported on six arbitrations that ignored your 0% plan. The Ontario PC caucus has uncovered the details of 11 more.

The Premier's plan is off the rails, and it looks like the McGuinty government is balancing the books largely on the backs of non-unionized workers, 100% of whom had their wages frozen. Why has Premier McGuinty created a two-tier wage freeze?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to begin just by putting a few facts on the record. Ontario has the fewest public servants per capita of any province. We have the second most efficient public service in Canada, according to Statistics Canada. We capped the size of the Ontario public service in 2008. We are now on track to reducing the size of the Ontario public service by 5% in 2012. We laid that policy out; we're more than halfway there. We expanded the sunshine list to cover OPG and Hydro One, which the Conservatives tried to hide. The average salary of OPS members on the sunshine list decreased by 2% last year. We reduced consultant use by 54% from the time he was in government. We will continue to build on our successes today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: Premier McGuinty hasn't held the line on wages, and now long-term-care homes in Toronto and Ottawa are scrambling to deal with awards of 9% or more over three years. He let arbitrator awards take over 5.5% over two years out of the budgets of senior care homes in Kingston, Orangeville and Thessalon, yet Premier McGuinty is quoted say-

ing the province will not fund any wage increases for the next two years.

Why is the only hard line Premier McGuinty has taken with long-term-care homes who cannot afford these deals?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: With respect, I don't believe this is about hard lines in the sense that—that member wants to pick a fight, and we want to build a better public service that's more efficient for all Ontarians.

I would remind the member opposite that, in the case of long-term-care homes, many of those are privately owned, owned outside of the province, and there are challenges with respect to executive compensation in those organizations. But unlike the member opposite, this government's plan is not to pick a fight with relatively low-paid workers while you ignore what's happening on the balance sheet and income statements of large multi-national health care providers.

It is about finding the right balance, it is about getting back to a balanced budget, it's about building on the success of our health care system and our education system, and it's about being fair to all and ensuring that this province continues to grow well into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Premier McGuinty's wage restraint plan for balancing the books has gone badly off the rails. Tom Closson of the Ontario Hospital Association says, "The plan failed. What we need is a new plan." By backtracking on actual wage restraint, Premier McGuinty has left Revera long-term care, which seniors across Ontario call home, without money to pay wage hikes of 7.25% over three years. He left care homes in Huntsville, Pembroke, Woodstock, New Liskeard and across Ontario short of millions for imposed wage increases.

Premier, will your backtracking on the wage restraint plan leave homes to raise residents' fees that Ontario seniors pay or reduce front-line support staff, or both?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government has invested unprecedented sums of money in long-term care. The member wants to ignore that. We are building 35,000 new beds right across the province of Ontario. Those beds are coming online now. Just last week I had the opportunity to tour a brand new facility in my riding that will be receiving patients for the first time in January.

I have confidence that the working men and women in those facilities, the companies that own them, the American companies that own them and compensate their executives, will want to work together with us to provide the best quality of service at an affordable price for all Ontarians.

This government's commitment is to reinvest in health care; he's promised to take \$3 billion out of health care. We reject that play, we reject that way of doing business, and we will fight you on that, just like we're fighting you on energy and how to run a province.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. For all of the Premier's tough talk on wage restraint, the

only hard line he has taken is with long-term-care homes that have to manage resources for wage increases and Ontario seniors, who will pay more and live with less. Some 77,000 seniors live in our long-term-care homes. The Premier's inaction means their homes will be forced to cut services and staff. My question is: What impact will the Premier's failure to hold the line on public sector wages have for those 77,000 seniors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, we now have achieved a number of collective agreements in Ontario since the introduction of the policy. The average settlement is coming down. The average settlement right now is 1.7%. For the first time, it's fallen below the average settlement in the federal public service as well as the average settlement in the municipal public service, and it's now below the average settled in the private sector in Ontario.

That member and her party cut nurses; they fired nurses. We have hired nurses, both in acute care and in long-term care. I believe that everybody working together can help us bring the budget back to balance. We are seeing progress now. This government wants to build partnerships; that party wants fights. We're going to avoid that and work with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: That's interesting, because in its November 2010 funding submission, the Ontario Long Term Care Association questioned why Premier McGuinty is backtracking from his wage restraint plan. They told the Minister of Health that as a result of arbitration decisions, wage costs will increase by \$60 million.

The McGuinty Liberals' failure to create any new long-term-care beds over the past seven years shows that the homes do not have \$60 million sitting around, waiting to be spent. Based on the OLTCA submission, homes will have no choice but to lay off 1,300 nurses and seniors' care providers if the Premier continues backtracking from his wage restraint plan.

Why did Premier McGuinty tell Ontario seniors and families he would deliver a wage freeze and protect health care, but not do it?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have to reject the presupposition of the question. In fact, what we said was, we are going to work with our partners in the public and broader public sectors to bring down wages to a zero and zero through negotiation.

I want to stress at the outset that we reject what they want to do, which is pick fights. We don't want a scenario—we don't want to go back to where we were. The people of Ontario remember what happened.

Leadership is very much about building. It is about partnership. I'm proud of the fact that we are now the lowest-settlements-on-average across the federal, provincial and municipal public services.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Real progress.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's real progress.

We will continue to work with the long-term-care side as well as with the unions there. We will continue to build on the progress we've made.

There's more to do, and I believe all Ontarians want to work together and want to reject your idea about picking fights with just about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter is that Premier McGuinty's wage-restraint plan is badly off the rails. He backtracked from his tough talk about a wage freeze and left long-term-care homes to fend for themselves. Now, they have to deal with massive layoffs as a result of these arbitration awards. Some 1,300 nurses and senior care workers will receive layoff notices in April 2011, and those cuts are just the tip of the iceberg.

Why hasn't the Premier done anything to protect Ontario seniors and families from cuts to front-line health care, despite all of his promises?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Here we go again, coming from the no-plan zone. They say a lot of things, they don't say things accurately, they don't say what they would do and they fail to remember their own record. Let me just remind my colleague opposite about what they did with nurses. They fired 6,200 nurses; we've hired 10,000.

I accept the challenges. The Premier reminds me that with co-operation, working with our partners in the broader public sector, we have raised test scores, we have improved education and we have improved health care. Let's talk about wait times, working with our partners. They didn't have a wait times strategy; we do, and we've funded over two million procedures so far.

We don't want to go back to their—show us your plan. It's a no-plan zone over there. They have no idea—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. After seven long years, two false starts and a 70% increase in the hydro bills families pay, the McGuinty government now says that they have the hydro file figured out. Is this the last plan we can expect to see from this government, or can we expect another one between now and the next election?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have a long-term energy plan. It projects our needs during the course of the next 20 years. We have put forward what I would argue is a visionary document. It's going to ensure that our families breathe clean air; it's going to ensure that we create thousands of new jobs in an exciting, revolutionary green technology industry; and it's going to provide every Ontarian with the peace of mind that comes from knowing that we're going to have all the electricity we need—that's clean electricity—for our families to enjoy their lives and for our businesses to grow and to thrive. We have a very specific plan.

I think it's now incumbent upon my honourable colleague opposite to put forward her plan. I think if we're going to engage, in an intelligent way, in a thoughtful debate, we've done our part. We've put forward a plan. It has got all the specifics, including all the costs. I think my honourable colleague has got to do the same, and it would be helpful if she'd do that just today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier says all his cards are on the table, but for Ontario families facing hundreds, sometimes thousands, of dollars in costs, the hand they've been dealt isn't a winning one.

On behalf of families, the Premier has signed private power deals worth billions of dollars, but the details are all secret. When will the Premier finally truly show us all the cards that he has played and make the contracts public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's talk about some of those dastardly private deals. Ten thousand of those private deals were signed with Ontario farmers. Just so we get into a bit more detail—because we've got lots of it and they have none—the typical investment by a farmer is \$30,000. The typical annual revenue that will generate is \$2,500. That's what we are talking about with these "secret" private deals: 10,000 farmers, average investment \$30,000. They're going to the bank and borrowing that money, by the way. It gives them an additional \$2,500 every year, which supplements the income they get otherwise from their crops and other farm activities. We think that's an important contribution to the quality of life in rural Ontario. We're going to get clean power out of that, and we're creating jobs when we manufacture those solar panels and install them. That's part of our plan. We've got a plan, Speaker. They don't.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier isn't gambling with his own money here; it's money that belongs to hard-working Ontarians. He's saddled them with an expensive plan that he can't explain and he won't defend. Thousands of dollars will be coming out of family budgets to pay for these hydro deals. Yesterday I asked the Premier to explain his numbers. He refused.

Today I'm asking whether people can see the contracts this government is forcing them to pay for. How soon can we expect that, if ever?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There are all kinds of community interests that have gotten involved in this exciting, revolutionary job creation, clean energy generating program in Ontario. I'd encourage my honourable colleague to get in touch with the Reverend Doug Moore. He's at the Laidlaw Memorial church in Hamilton. This is the first church in Ontario to feed energy into the grid. I can tell you that the parishioners are very proud that they are able to make this contribution. There are hundreds of community groups, faith-based organizations, municipalities, universities, schools and renewable energy co-ops, all kinds of community groups across the province of Ontario, that are onboard with our plan.

We have a plan. We're proud of our plan. We're sticking to our plan. It would be nice if they had a plan.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Here's what families see: a government that spent years promising rates would hardly go up, and double-digit increases on their hydro bills; a government that said coal plants would be closed three years ago, making the same promises over and over again.

If the government is so proud of their plan, why can't they answer the basic question about the math behind it or provide basic information about the deals they're signing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just want my honourable colleague to understand what and who she's against as she opposes our plan.

Here is another story: Habitat for Humanity built 20 homes—

Mr. Paul Miller: Get a life.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please come to order. If he's going to remain sitting in that seat, it's best that he sit there silently.

Mr. Paul Miller: Your choice. Okay.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East—

Mr. Mario Sergio: Throw him out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, I don't need any help from the member from York West in doing my job. But I would just say to the member from Hamilton East that it's one thing to have interjections, but some of the animation that he demonstrates in leaving one chair and going to another is not helpful for keeping this House respectful of one another. And I would just ask that he be conscious of his use of hand gestures.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand why my honourable colleagues in that party don't want to be confronted with the reality of our plan, because it's good news.

Here's one more good story: Habitat for Humanity built 20 homes in west Toronto. Those homes will all soon be part of our microFIT program. Habitat is not only providing safe, affordable places to live for 96 people; they are adding clean power to the grid through solar energy, they are helping to pay their household costs, and as well, they're being part of our program. That's just one more example of tens of thousands of Ontarians who are excited about this program. They see their place in the future. They want to be part of clean energy. They want to be part of clean air. They want to be part of new jobs and a stronger economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's plan is based on contracts they will not disclose and details they

will not share. Can the government provide any accounting of how they plan to refurbish 10 reactors and build two new ones for \$15 billion less than anyone in Ontario's history?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Here's what Lynn Acre, the outgoing mayor of Bayham, said: "Wind energy is having an incredibly positive impact on our community. The Erie Shores wind farm has become part of our identity. My advice would be to come and see it for yourself."

Here's Lou Madonna, the reeve of the township of Prince, which is near Sault Ste. Marie; he said this: "The township ... is happy with the wind farm. We have 61 ... turbines and I wish we had 60 more. When you consider the revenue, why wouldn't I?... For the township, it's a win-win situation."

People across the province want to be part of this program. We're talking about economic opportunities; we're talking about clean air; we're talking about a visionary approach to meeting our electricity demands for the next 20 years. It's a solid, well-crafted, thoughtful, responsible plan, and it would be nice if they had even the semblance of a plan over there to produce for Ontarians to take a look at.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Premier wants to know what the NDP is planning, I can give him a sneak preview: We won't promise a rate freeze for families and then go ahead and double their rates. We won't tell people that rates aren't increasing when they are. We won't spend eight years making empty promises to close coal plants and never ever get any results. And we won't slap an unfair sales tax on families that are already hurting in uncertain times.

After seven long years, does this Premier really think anyone believes him on how he plans to make things better for people in this province? Nobody believes him—nobody.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure there was a question in that, but let me just take the opportunity, since they don't have a plan, to describe what we can see in this murky fog in terms of the position adopted by the NDP.

They're against renewables. They're against all those thousands of jobs that we're going to create as a result of building a clean-energy technology industry in Ontario. They're against the clean air that flows from the use of renewables, which our families, I think, attach a great deal of importance to. They're also against nuclear energy. One half of the power that we get in Ontario today comes from our nuclear reactors.

We have a thoughtful plan; it's a 20-year plan and the first long-term energy plan of its kind. It's designed to ensure that our families have access to new jobs in an exciting new dimension of the economy. It's all about clean air. It's about ensuring that we have the peace of mind that comes from knowing we're going to have all the electricity we need, but more than that, it is clean electricity.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. How many hours each week are government computers used for watching sports highlights and visiting entertainment websites and other websites that reduce productivity?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I thank the member for asking this question. We have about 65,000 employees in the public service. I've had the unique privilege of working in both the public sector and the private sector. I want to tell you that I'm very proud of our public sector because they perform a very useful service. I'm constantly impressed with the quality of the work that they do and the commitment they have to providing customer service to the people.

We have very stringent systems in place to make sure that there is proper use of the computer systems. If ever there is misuse, there are protocols in place and people are held accountable for it. There have even been some people who were dismissed if they abused the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't hear an answer in that; I hear more of an excuse. Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs stand up with the Ontario families who are struggling to keep up with a Premier who can't stop spending their money. Premier McGuinty isn't holding the line on salaries for senior bureaucrats. He won't hold the line on wage freezes that protect what Ontario's families want invested in health care. The Premier doesn't want Ontario families to know how much they pay for time wasted on improper use of computer systems and lost time that should be spent serving the taxpayers who are paying.

The Liberals have spent a year fighting tooth and nail to block releases, even of the number of hours being wasted. How do you, the integrity czar, justify hiding proof of the McGuinty Liberals' waste from the families of Ontario who are paying for that very service?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this: I know the member opposite knows that the freedom-of-information requests are handled by the people who are assigned to handle those requests, and the minister's office, or the minister's staff, actually had no relationship with handling the freedom-of-information requests.

I heard about this issue for the first time today, as did the member. But I want to assure Ontarians that there are systems and checks and balances in place. If anybody misuses the system, they are accounted for, and there is solid action taken each and every time.

But I'm very proud of the public sector and the work that they perform. We are not going to beat up on the public sector the way they do, but we are proud of the public sector and the work that they perform.

SMART METERS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. With each passing day, it becomes clearer that this government simply didn't know what it was doing when it implemented its smart meter program. New re-

search suggests that some of those so-called smart meters are only certified to minus 30 degrees centigrade; this in a province where many regions experience prolonged cold snaps where the temperature drops to minus 30 degrees centigrade or lower.

Will this government finally admit that its smart meter program is in chaos and that its implementation has been bungled?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question, but I have to ask him, where is your plan to modernize our energy system? You stand here day after day, your leader stands here day after day, criticizing the critical investments we're making in our energy system to provide a modernized meter system to Ontarians, to give them access to what will be the coming smart grid.

We're preparing this province for the modernization of our energy system. That's why we've put together a long-term energy plan that's going to guide us through the next 20 years.

I ask the member, what is your plan to modernize this energy system?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This minister clearly has no answer to that question, so I'll go to another question.

This government had no idea what it was doing with the smart meter program. All over Ontario, smart meters have been installed that apparently cannot talk to each other, cannot talk to the central data processing centre run by the IESO—fundamental telecommunications problems with what they're installing. Our offices have been flooded with complaints that the meters are just plain inaccurate.

When will this government admit that it bungled the implementation of the smart meter program by not insisting on common technical specifications? When, Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I remember a day when this member used to support conservation. I remember a day when he used to call for the modernization of our energy system. In fact, I have a quote here from back in those days. This is what the member said to the policy-makers of the time: "Don't ignore the economic opportunities that are presented by conservation and renewable energy—not to mention the enormous costs if we do nothing." That member has moved a long way from those days.

I'm going to ask the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, through you—maybe we should have a moment of silence for the member, who has now gone over to the dark side, who no longer supports conservation. He's joining the Tories in his anti-conservation policies.

It would be nice if they had a plan to help us modernize our energy system. They don't, so all they can do is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, Ontario families and businesses

need honesty and clarity when it comes to what they'd expect to see on their energy bills. These families and businesses, like all of us, budget for future costs. They need a government that thoroughly plans for their future when it comes to our energy system and one that is forthcoming with them about what that plan is and what it means for all of us as we move forward. It is simply not acceptable for families not to have stability—like back in 2002, when Ontarians saw electricity prices jump 30% in just seven months.

Minister, how are you making sure that families have the clarity and the reliable information they will need going forward?

1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. It is an important question, and that's what our long-term energy plan is all about. It's about laying out our plans to build a clean, reliable, modern energy system for the next 20 years—the investments required to make that happen and the costs associated with those investments.

We're being straight up with Ontarians about our plan and the investments required to bring it about. We've been very clear that the increase in costs of our energy plan is about 3.5% a year over the next 20 years. To put that into perspective, if you go back 20 years ago to 1990, it's the same increases over the next 20 years that we've seen over the previous 20 years.

There are those in the House who sit across the aisle, in that plan-free zone over there, who think that clean, reliable, modern energy somehow can invent itself, somehow can come about without making these important investments. It does take effort. It takes courage. It takes vision. It takes leadership. Clearly, the members opposite do not have that leadership, do not have the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Again to the Minister: Ontario's long-term energy plan does lay out the pragmatic and forward-thinking agenda for Ontarians that they're looking for. Knowing the costs and benefits associated with building new supply, upgrading and modernizing our transmission grid, and transitioning from a province heavily reliant on dirty coal to a province powered by a clean and healthy mix of reliable and renewable resources is exactly the kind of certainty that Ontario families need.

It is not acceptable for Ontarians to worry about whether there's a sufficient supply of energy or to worry about where that energy comes from. They did enough worrying about that just eight years ago, when demand was outstripping supply and the use of coal was driven up by 127%.

What do you think is the biggest threat to achieving our long-term energy goals?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's no question that by far the most serious threat to us building that strong, reliable, clean energy system is just simply right across the aisle:

It's the Leader of the Opposition. He's the most serious threat to creating those thousands of clean energy jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I've just received a document here. It comes from the side—I'm not quite sure. It says that it's the PC Party energy plan, 2010. If you don't mind, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to read a little bit of the excerpts from it. I'll be right with you. The document—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the Minister of Energy, the Speaker's not impressed. That was a definite use of a prop, and he knows better than that.

New question.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. Your Premier and government are clearly out of touch with the priorities of Ontario parents. Rather than focus on issues that matter to parents and children, the Premier has shown a disturbing preoccupation with pet projects unrelated to parental priorities. Whereas you've demonstrated your concern with banning junk food and chocolate milk, the PC caucus supports the empowerment of parents in order that they can fulfill their important role in their children's education.

Your decision to eliminate grades on the fall report card is an affront to parents. Why have you robbed parents of the ability to know how their children are truly performing?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Parents have made it very clear to us that they expect their government to invest in education and support their students. Parents have made it very clear that they expect students to continue to improve in terms of achievement.

Since we've come to government, we have invested over 40% in our schools; students are achieving better test scores; and we have higher graduation rates. And we certainly have listened to parents when they told us that they wanted the opportunity for their students to attend kindergarten for full days. We know that on the other side of the House they say that's a frill. We have listened to parents. They are overwhelmingly supportive of this initiative. It is one we are committed to, and we know that it will continue to better support student achievement now and going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again to the Minister: At a time when Ontario does need strong leadership and the opportunity for parents to be involved in their children's education, we have seen this government backtrack, and the minister backtrack, on at least half a dozen education policies, such as changes to the sex ed curriculum, cellphones in the classroom, chocolate milk and cash for grades.

Minister, parents want you to listen to them. Will you now put grades back on the fall report card?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We listen very closely to what parents have to say. We are very grateful that they

appreciate the investments that we have made, and we're delighted with the success of students as a result of the hard work of teachers and parents.

What parents have been telling us, though—they are concerned about something. They're concerned about the fact that the commitment to have full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario is not a vision that is shared on the other side of the House.

We have received concerns as well from parents who—they appreciate our phased approach but they want it now. If there's anything that parents are saying to us on a regular basis and that school boards are coming to us with, it's that there is a tremendous demand from parents across Ontario to have full-day kindergarten now.

We are taking a phased approach. We are absolutely committed: By 2015, we're going to have full-day kindergarten in all schools in the province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PEST CONTROL

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Bedbugs are a growing nuisance and a health concern to families across Ontario. Toronto Public Health asked the province to get involved in the fight to control bedbugs back in February 2008. They asked again in February 2009, and last week, they asked again if the McGuinty government would help them fight the bedbugs.

The McGuinty government refused all of their requests. Close to three years since Toronto Public Health raised the alarm bells on this issue, infestations have exploded.

Why has the Premier ignored public health experts on the bedbug issue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, and I want to begin by congratulating the MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence, Mike Colle, for his leadership on this very important issue.

This is a very important matter of public health. Again, I want to thank the MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence for his leadership for the summit that he hosted. I want to thank him for the recommendations that he has put forward.

I spoke with him on this very subject yesterday. We are now beginning to consider those recommendations, and I commit to finding a way to move forward on some of those recommendations at the earliest possible opportunity. I want to do that in concert with our public health officials around the province; I think we have a shared responsibility. We look forward to providing some leadership in this area, too.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will to remind him that his colleague is asking for resources to help in this war.

The Toronto medical officer of health has been clear that they need funding support from the province to prevent the spread of bedbugs. Over a year ago, the chief

medical officer of health from Toronto said that “Toronto Public Health is not adequately resourced” to address this issue.

I can't believe that in this province, in this city of Toronto that has lived through SARS, we do not take public health as an important issue and as the serious issue that it is.

How can this government dismiss repeated requests over three years from public health experts? How many more homes will have to be affected, how many hotels, how many hospitals, how many long-term-care homes, before the McGuinty government finally takes action to stop the bedbugs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm pleased to engage in an important discussion on this issue. This is not an easy topic for many to discuss. The fact of the matter is, there's some stigma and embarrassment associated with this. There's a tremendous amount of fear.

One of those responsibilities that we sense is to ensure that we're providing good, solid, reliable information with respect to the bedbug issue. I'm proud that our deputy chief medical officer of health attended the summit and is now also reviewing the work that was conducted there and the recommendations that we received.

I do want to say, and I would remind my honourable colleague, that we have provided a record level of funding to the Toronto public health services. We've almost doubled it since 2003; it's up \$60 million.

But I also want to remind my honourable colleague that bedbugs, while they have been discussed with a great deal of profile here in the community of Toronto, also affect other parts of the province. We want to ensure that our response to the summit recommendations speak to those concerns broadly as well.

1110

POVERTY

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Yesterday, Campaign 2000 released a report claiming that in 2008, poverty increased in Ontario. Constituents in the western Mississauga neighbourhoods of Streetsville, Meadowvale and Lisgar have said that the patterns of poverty are different in Peel than they are in Metro Toronto, and poverty is every bit as serious a matter.

Ontario's poverty reduction strategy has set specific targets. Yesterday's report suggests that the province may not meet its poverty reduction targets, or that poverty reduction has somehow fallen off our government's radar. Minister, please tell the House how poverty reduction remains a priority for our province and our government.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for the question, and thank Campaign 2000 for their report and for being part of the consultations that help shape our poverty reduction strategy.

We have a plan. We launched Ontario's poverty reduction strategy in December 2008, and we're currently

in the second year of the strategy. The data from yesterday's report was collected in 2008, and our key investments in child care, housing, the Ontario child benefit and full-day kindergarten are not reflected in Statistics Canada data.

Ontario is just now emerging from a worldwide recession. Families are in need of support, and that's why the Ontario child benefit puts more money in families' pockets. We have a plan, and we're acting on it. Our investments are lifting children and families out of poverty. We're proud of that plan, and we're going to continue to work on that long-term strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Regularly, I get a chance to meet with some of the poverty awareness groups in our community, such as the Eden Community Food Bank in Meadowvale, Fair Share for Peel and certainly organizations like The Dam in Meadowvale that serve so many of our at-risk youth.

If the province is to continue its work on poverty reduction, please tell my constituents in western Mississauga what these investments look like in our western Mississauga community. How are real Ontario kids and their families seeing the efforts of poverty reduction close to our homes in western Mississauga?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for his advocacy on behalf of his community. We've been working hard on all fronts to support Ontario's families, especially children and youth. Right now, there are three classes offering full-day kindergarten in the member's riding; eight classes will be offering it this fall. We have served 8,800 children in our student nutrition program, with an investment of over \$600,000 in Peel. Last year, 9,500 children in Peel received a child care subsidy, and Peel's Ontario early years centres received \$4.1 million and served 43,000 children, parents and caregivers. We created 200 youth jobs in Peel.

Reducing poverty isn't about politics or partisanship; it's about having a plan and working together to provide the opportunity for people to achieve their full potential. That's what our plan is all about.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. He will know that the Sunrise Propane incident of two years ago was the result of illegal activity and the failure of the TSSA to enforce its own regulations. He also knows that regulation 400/08, coming into effect on January 1, does nothing to address the enforcement problem and will end up costing each operator a minimum of \$25,000 to prepare detailed safety plans, forcing many of them to close.

The Ontario Propane Association has been trying for two years to tell the minister that this regulation will not work, will cost thousands of jobs and will do nothing to enhance safety. When will he replace this regulation and instruct his staff to bring forward a regulation that works?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I want to thank the member for that question, because I know it has been a

concern within the propane industry over the last number of years. But public safety remains our absolute number one concern and priority, and I'm sure that the member feels the same way about that.

Yes, we are the first jurisdiction in Canada to require propane operators to have an RSMP. However, we also realize that it may place an undue burden, particularly on the smaller operators, and we're talking about those operators that have a facility of 5,000 US water gallons or less. We have placed on the registry a proposal to deal with the smaller operators. We have been in constant contact, over the last three or four months, with the propane association. We hope to bring something forward fairly soon that will deal with their concerns.

But our main concern remains the safety and security of the people of Ontario. I'm sure that we will be able to come up with a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: The minister needs to understand the consequences of his regulation. Thousands of jobs will be lost as propane refill stations across the province are forced to close. Thousands of environmentally friendly propane-powered vehicles, including school buses, recreational vehicles, special vans for the disabled and elderly, couriers and taxis will have no place to refill their tanks. These people, including many Ontario municipalities, have converted to a cleaner fuel to help reduce greenhouse gases.

I ask the minister: Will he stand in his place today and assure this House that his seriously flawed regulation will be fixed before it is too late and we see thousands of jobs lost in Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As I mentioned before, the proposed changes were available for public review on the government's regulatory registry website. We are reviewing the comments and have been working with the Ontario Propane Association. We've certainly attempted to make whatever effort is necessary in order to resolve this issue.

We realize that an awful lot of people in Ontario rely on propane for heating purposes and other purposes as well. We want to make sure that we do the right thing for the safety of the people of Ontario, but we also want to make sure that these propane dealers that have been in existence for a long period of time providing good, valuable service will be able to continue to provide their service in the years to come. We are working on it, and a resolution will be found to the situation that you've just raised.

CORONER'S INQUEST

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In late 2009, Reilly Anzovino was seriously injured in a car accident and subsequently died. Following this tragedy, the Premier agreed that a coroner's inquest should examine the factors contributing to Reilly's death. The inquest is moving ahead, but the Anzovino family has

learned that they have no access to legal funding, leaving them to shoulder the burden of expenses in addition to the emotional toll of reliving Reilly's death.

Will the Premier ensure that the Anzovino family is provided with the assistance that they need through this process?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will want the opportunity to pursue this matter.

Coroner's investigations are conducted independently. The coroner has jurisdiction. The coroner makes various decisions about participation. The issues that the member raises are important ones. I will make sure that they're brought to the attention of my colleague who will bring them to the attention of the coroner in due course. We'll make sure that they're brought to the attention of the coroner so that they can be dealt with in a responsible and respectful way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Anzovino inquest is a matter of public interest. Reilly Anzovino's death was tragic, and many questions remain about the contributing circumstances and what should be changed for the future. Reilly's family has, luckily, a pro bono legal representative, and they're only asking for a modest amount to cover some of the additional fees that they're going to have to pay out. Funds are available, and they would ensure that the family can actively participate in the inquest process.

Will the Premier, the minister and the other minister that he indicated all ensure that financial assistance is approved so that this government makes sure that the right thing is done for the Anzovino family?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Our sympathy goes out to the family participating in an enormously difficult, emotionally wrenching and trying situation.

The leader of the third party raises an important point. All members of this House would want every appropriate measure to be taken. I appreciate the leader of the third party raising this with me. I'll make sure this is brought to the attention, immediately, of those it needs to be.

Again, our sympathy and our hearts, in this very difficult time, go out to the family who are looking to participate in this what must be an enormously emotionally wrenching and trying situation.

1120

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Mario Sergio: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Transportation: Having vehicle insurance is the law for anyone driving in Ontario. It is not only the law; it is also common sense. The Insurance Bureau of Canada estimated that in 2005, at least 400,000 drivers in Ontario did not have insurance. This is more than 4% of Ontario's 8.9 million licensed drivers. Studies show that uninsured drivers cause a significant number of col-

lisions. This highlights the potential danger that honest Ontario drivers could be in.

Drivers are required to submit information about their insurance company and policy when they renew their licence. To the minister: What can the government of Ontario do to find a way to verify insurance at the point of renewal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for this important question. The fact that Ontario has some of the safest roads in North America is something we want to maintain. We've introduced tough drinking and driving legislation and distracted driving laws, are tackling street racing, and obviously the issue of uninsured drivers is a very important one.

The Ministry of Transportation has been working with the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Ministry of Finance and ServiceOntario on an uninsured vehicle program. I'm happy to say that, as of this month, November 29, we'll be able to electronically verify the validity of insurance when an individual registers or renews their licence plate sticker. This will provide real-time insurance verification for passenger vehicles when people renew their licence plate stickers, and this is a significant improvement in that service to Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I've seen the numbers, and the need for action is clear. In December 2008, there were more than nine million drivers in Ontario. In 2009, there were 13.6 million registered passenger vehicles in Ontario. In 2006, 0.5% of the total number of vehicles involved in collisions on Ontario roads were reported as not insured. The insurance industry has estimated that, in the past, between 6% and 15% of vehicles on the road were uninsured. In the States, a total of 28 states have an insurance verification program already in place.

I know that currently MTO asks vehicle owners to present their insurance information as part of the vehicle licence renewal application. To the minister, will people still need to present their paper insurance information at time of registration?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've been working, as I said, with the Insurance Bureau of Canada. The two databases, the MTO database and the IBC database, have to be able to talk to each other. There has to be a transfer of millions of pieces of data. Yes, people will still have to present their insurance information at the MTO, but now they'll have the added assurance of real-time verification.

We've done consultations with the insurance industry from June 2009. In July 2010, I sent a letter of direction to the insurance industry of Ontario advising them of their obligations to report insurance information in a timely way for the purposes of insurance status verification, and beginning this past August, letters were sent out to Ontarians 120 days prior to their licence plate renewal expiry date. If there was a problem matching insurance information, letters specified that people should get in touch with their insurance provider.

That process is under way. This will be a very comprehensive program that will provide better service to Ontarians.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Attorney General. In two media scrums, the Attorney General made pointed reference that, in 30 years, he has never seen anything like the bizarre antics of Paul Alexander. He stressed the same point in answer to my questions yesterday. For a case this extraordinary, one would expect him to be fully briefed, yet yesterday, when asked, he could not or would not say if Alexander had been suspended.

How can Ontario families have confidence when you can't answer their questions about this case?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I did indicate that, in 30 years in the criminal justice system, I had never seen or heard any case quite like this. I know it's in court today, so we'll let the court proceeding pursue.

I also indicated that the chief prosecutor was looking into this matter. The chief prosecutor is looking into this matter and will take the appropriate action. I can further indicate, it's my understanding, that the crown is not in on any in-court duties at this time, while the chief prosecutor is undertaking his review.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We know that Premier McGuinty is out of touch, clearly, and that the ministers he surrounds himself with are as well. Innocent victims are pushed aside at Caledonia. David Chen faces charges while repeat offender Anthony Bennett gets a plea bargain. Last week, a \$1.2-million fraud case was deemed not important enough for court resources. Now, there's a case like no other he has seen in 30 years, and all the Attorney General has to offer is spin and media lines.

Tell me, Attorney General, when did you get so out of touch with the priorities of Ontario citizens and families?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: One of the characteristics of the system of justice—a characteristic of all of the very challenging and difficult situations that come before the courts—is that we do not make the final decision on the street, at the barricade, in the media. We actually allow for the accumulation of facts, the determination of what actually happened and the application of the appropriate laws or procedures.

It's not always popular to take a minute or two to make sure that we have the facts. It's not always easy, and there are many who would wish to make the instantaneous judgment. But justice is not like instant cereal; it takes a little longer to make sure that we get it right.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Tomorrow, Hamilton's Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits will rally to remind the government of their fight to save the special diet allowance and raise welfare rates. The 100,000 people in greater Hamilton who live in poverty also face a bleak Christmas and future unless these McGuinty Liberals finally take decisive, positive action, recognizing their dietary needs.

Will this government finally listen to poverty-stricken Ontarians and retain the special diet allowance?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This is a very good question, especially at this time of the year, when people are raising funds to help those in need in our communities, and I want to take this opportunity to thank them, because they're doing an extremely good job.

Yes, our people on OW and ODSP are very concerned about what's going on. They're concerned about their rates, and I want to remind them that we pay a lot of attention to that. That's why we have introduced so many programs within different ministries, because poverty not only has to do with my ministry, but it has to do with a lot of ministries: health care, for instance; education; labour. We have launched quite a few programs to help those in need.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: For 15 years, single recipients have received a substandard \$580 a month, condemned to severe poverty. Unlike the minister, I lived on the welfare diet for a few days and was quickly feeling ill and unable to do basic physical tasks, let alone fight this government for decent support. The McGuinty government has turned its back on the poor in Ontario, obvious by their need to rally tomorrow in Hamilton.

Will this government recognize the horrible impact of its inaction and finally secure a decent living and dietary allowance for social assistance recipients?

1130

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I just want to remind the member opposite that when we came into power in 2003, the special diet allowance was \$6 million. This year, today, as we speak, it's \$200 million. So I take exception to what this member is saying about the special diet allowance.

I have to also take into consideration the report of the Auditor General. We have to be concerned about those who need our services and we have to also pay attention to the money that is provided to us by taxpayers in Ontario.

I just want to remind those opposite that we raised social assistance by 12% since we came to power and we have introduced that wonderful program, the Ontario child benefit, that I'm very proud of. My ministry has worked closely and we know that now the OCB—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOURISM

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Recent Statistics Canada figures indicate that tourism numbers have increased this summer compared to the same time last year. This is great news and we must continue to build on this success to ensure that the tourism industry remains strong and vibrant.

The Royal Ontario Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Ontario Science Centre are just a few of the

cultural institutions that entertain thousands of tourists in Toronto every year. They provide insight into our rich heritage and showcase the talents of our artists for those visiting. But in order to successfully showcase our wonderful attractions, we must ensure that all visitors, including those with disabilities, have access. What is the government doing to promote our cultural attractions and ensure that all visitors have access to them?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you to the honourable member for his question. I know we have an important responsibility to promote our cultural attractions and to ensure that they are accessible to all those visiting our great province. The transformation of our major cultural attractions brings greater accessibility. Our government has invested over \$165 million to support transformation projects like the Royal Ontario Museum, Art Gallery of Ontario, Gardiner Museum, National Ballet School, Royal Conservatory of Music and Canadian Opera House. We are going to keep investing to strengthen tourism, to strengthen culture and to strengthen Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period as ended and there are no deferred votes.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday, the member for Newmarket–Aurora rose on a point of order respecting answers to written questions that he had asked of the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the Minister of Energy. The government House leader, Ms. Smith, and the third party House leader, Mr. Kormos, made submissions on this point of order.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora complained that the answers to his written questions were not acceptable on the grounds that they were neither complete nor in some instances relevant to the question asked. While the member raised this issue as a point of order, he subsequently sought redress by way of a finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege.

Let me clarify at the outset that while it may be arguable that this is more appropriately dealt with as a point of privilege, it was not raised as such with the requisite notice given. In any case, it has been determined previously that such an issue does not constitute a *prima facie* case of privilege. However, from the perspective of the matter potentially being a violation of the rules, it is sufficient to raise it as a point of order and I will address it as such.

Standing order 99 sets out the provisions for written questions. With respect to the content or quality of the answers to written questions, standing order 99 is silent. It provides only that written questions be answered within 24 sessional days unless volume or complexity necessitate additional time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order, please. If you want to have a conversation please leave the chamber. It's important that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As in the case with oral questions, there are no provisions in the rules or customs of this place for the Speaker to scrutinize or evaluate government responses to written questions.

On May 18, 2010, I ruled on the same issue and stated at the time that “numerous Speakers have ruled that during oral question period ministers may answer a question any way they see fit. It's also the case that it's not the Speaker's responsibility to ensure that the answer to a written question satisfies that question.”

This is further supported, as the government House leader noted, in O'Brien and Bosc, page 522, where it says: “There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions.”

The House leader for the third party referenced standing order 1(b) and seemed to suggest that somehow the standing order might allow for an expanded interpretation of standing order 99. I can't agree. In my mind, standing order 1 is in the nature of a purpose clause and provides a general statement of principle about the standing orders themselves. I do not think it is intended to give licence to the Speaker to impose provisions or assert authority where none exists.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora indicated that he believed he had a legitimate and genuine grievance in this matter, and that may be so. But as a matter of procedure, the rules have been complied with, and I can find nothing out of order.

I thank the member for bringing this to the attention of the House, and the government and third party House leaders for their contributions to the discussion.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to introduce in the west gallery my friend Mohamed Fakih, the owner of Paramount Fine Foods. He's one of the most prominent businessmen in the Mississauga area. He's coming to witness the democratic process taking place in this place.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to introduce in the members' gallery two local municipal officials from my riding of Leeds–Grenville. First, I'd like to introduce Jim Pickard, mayor of the township of Elizabethtown–Kitley, and Mel Campbell, reeve of the township of Augusta. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Since we will be celebrating Albanian Independence Day on Sunday at 12 noon here in front of the Legislature, there is an Albanian community delegation on its way up here, consisting of the Ambassador of the Republic of Albania in Canada, Honourable Besnik Konçi; president of the Albanian Canadian Community Association, Dr. Ruki Kondaj; the representative of the Albanians of Kosovo community, Mr. Sami Ademi; and Ms. Borelda Mila, who is the representative of the Albanian youth committee. To them, we say congratulations and welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BROCKVILLE RIFLES

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an honour to rise today to recognize Winston Rogers, who retired as honorary colonel of the Brockville Rifles last week.

The regiment's proud history dates back to 1796, and it has maintained a special relationship with the city ever since. From its official formation in 1866, Brocks have carried the Brockville name with honour and bravery on to the battlefields across the world to defend Canadian values. In fact, this regiment of 153 members has sent 30 soldiers to Afghanistan, including four still stationed there.

On behalf of everyone in Leeds–Grenville, I want to thank Honorary Colonel Rogers for fighting to maintain the unit's independence when it faced amalgamation during his tenure. His passion mobilized public and political support to stand beside him on the front lines and won the unit a reprieve.

I can think of no greater legacy for Honorary Colonel Rogers than the assurance of knowing the proud history of the Brockville Rifles will continue beyond his tenure.

As I salute Honorary Colonel Rogers, I want to also congratulate his successor, Honorary Colonel Jack English, and the unit's incoming Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Ben TeKamp. I'm confident they will hold true to the Brockville Rifles' motto, "Semper Paratus," and be always ready to stand up for the men and women of the unit.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Bob Delaney: This past weekend, I hosted a family skate and food drive with Mississauga ward 9 councillor Pat Saito at Meadowvale Four-Rinks Arena. More than 300 friends, families and neighbourhoods from the Mississauga communities of Streetsville, Meadowvale and Lisgar came to lace up their skates and warm up with hot chocolate.

Participants brought non-perishable food and cash donations for the Eden Community Food Bank, which serves western Mississauga.

The Eden food bank's executive director, Bill Crawford, brought some volunteers to collect the donations of \$526 and 105 pounds of food raised during the family skate.

Pat Saito and I were able to meet and talk with many of our constituents, and residents were very interested in the new children's activity tax credit to help parents assist their children with, for example, skating lessons.

More importantly, many Meadowvale, Streetsville and Lisgar residents who would not have otherwise come out to skate did so last Sunday. Tomorrow's stars on ice, such as Sidney Crosby in hockey or Jamie Salé in skating, will come from all over Canada and from many communities of new Canadians who responded by embracing a Canadian love of physical activity on ice in cool weather last weekend in Meadowvale.

It was a great time. We are looking forward to doing it again. Thank you to all who attended.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to address the hardships that the HST has put on Ontario families, particularly those on fixed income.

On July 1, this government introduced the largest sales tax in history with the HST. The PC caucus fought this tax, advocating for Ontario families who saw hundreds of items and services hit with an additional 8%. My constituent in Burlington who is disabled and on CPP disability has had his condo fees increase from \$570 to \$640 and his monthly hydro bill increase from \$113 to \$141 due only to the HST. These increases have resulted in horrendous hardship for my constituent. He doesn't want this government's scripted political answers; he wants a solution that will help keep the lights and the heat on in his home so that he can have the basic necessities of life.

This government is failing Ontarians like my constituent. They are out of touch and they are completely negligent to the serious hardships of Ontarians. The real-life experiences like that of my constituents are falling on deaf ears. When will the McGuinty Liberals put politics aside and ensure that the HST doesn't put Ontarians in a position where the basic necessities of life are no longer plausible?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: Earlier this week, the McGuinty Liberals announced once again the decision to convert the Thunder Bay thermal generating station to natural gas. What they didn't mention is that only four years earlier, in 2006, the same McGuinty Liberals cancelled the conversion of the Thunder Bay thermal generating station to natural gas and wasted \$13 million of the people's money in the process. Nor did they mention the decision to cancel the Oakville natural gas plant, which also wasted a reported \$100 million of the people's money. This is another example of the McGuinty Liberals making up their hydro plan on the back of an envelope and changing it every second week with the most recent opinion polls.

But what isn't changing is the fact that, increasingly, ordinary people—whether they live in Thunder Bay or elsewhere in northwestern Ontario, or anywhere in Ontario—find it more and more difficult to pay the monthly hydro bill. People increasingly ask, "What kind of government would blow \$113 million of the people's money because it can't make up its mind if it's going to convert to natural gas generating stations or not?" But the price keeps on going up.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to talk about a wonderful initiative under way in Mississauga South. We in the south are truly fortunate to live in a community

that never fails to come together to support those most in need. That's why I'm very pleased to tell this House and the people of Mississauga that the second annual 'Twas the Bite Before Christmas holiday campaign in support of the Mississauga Food Bank and The Compass food bank is up and running.

We are building on last year's successful community campaign, which raised over 40,000 in cash and tonnes of non-perishable food items, and included a wonderful family turkey dinner.

People interested in supporting this worthy cause can do so in a number ways.

(1) We are hosting a 600-person family dinner on December 14 at the Oasis Convention Centre. This year's sold-out dinner will feature the renowned comedian, talk show host and local Mississauga resident Mike Bullard.

(2) We're also running another holiday turkey drive. Individuals can pledge to donate a turkey by filling out a donation form. Local businesses have been challenged to get involved by matching my personal donation of 10 turkeys. Last year, this program was a resounding success. We loaded a tractor-trailer full with over 450 homegrown Ontario turkeys, and this year we hope to do even better.

(3) Non-perishable food items are also being accepted at local businesses, at Mississauga fire stations and at my constituency office.

I encourage anyone wishing to get involved with 'Twas the Bite Before Christmas to contact my office. We thank everyone who's donating time, money or food to help Mississauga families this holiday season.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad to inform the House that Lucas Maciesza is now receiving the potentially life-saving medication that he needs. The Wellington county resident had to wait as his family, friends and community pushed the government of Ontario to cover Soliris, the drug that he needs to live.

I want to thank Rick Maciesza, Lucas's father, for having the courage to speak out. I also wish to thank my colleagues the member for Whitby—Oshawa, Christine Elliott, and the member for Kitchener—Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer, for their assistance and advice. The media, Tanya Talaga of the Toronto Star in particular, deserve credit for bringing attention to this life-or-death situation. We're also very fortunate that so many health professionals spoke out publicly about Lucas's critical need for this medication.

While Lucas is finally receiving Soliris, this isn't over. It appears he may require it for the foreseeable future, and we'll need the minister's absolute assurance that the province will cover the cost.

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The government needs to fix its broken policy when it comes to drug coverage, and I'm glad that the Premier yesterday acknowledged as much. What happened to Lucas makes it clear that Ontario needs a consistent policy, not one which depends on where a patient hap-

pens to live or whether a particular hospital is in a position to cover the cost of the medication.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: On Wednesday morning, just yesterday, I had the pleasure of being at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre with my colleagues Kathleen Wynne and Deb Matthews, the Minister of Health. We were all video-linked to Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre for an amazing announcement. Sunnybrook and Thunder Bay Regional are launching a revolutionary dual-site surgical centre. They will be starting trials treating people with tumours with MRI-guided, high-intensity, focused ultrasound machines, the first two of their kind in Canada. What this means is that they will be able to remove tumours with no scalpel, no needles, and often no anaesthetic. It's hard to believe medical science has come this far, but it's actually happening and it's going to be happening in Thunder Bay.

A short time ago our government provided \$15 million of assistance to the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute. That initial investment has helped set some extraordinary things in motion. It is through TBRRI and Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre that this recent partnership with Sunnybrook has come about and so much good work is occurring.

Thunder Bay's economy is being transformed with the growth of the knowledge-based sector. We're diversifying, and this change is providing patients with significantly improved health outcomes. I want to congratulate everyone at both sites of the new surgical centre, especially those in Thunder Bay, including the hospital's former CEO Ron Saddington, the current CEO, Andrée Robichaud, the regional research institute's CEO, Michael Power, Doctors Panu and Curiel, all the other researchers and clinicians, and the board of directors. What you're doing is truly extraordinary.

ALBANIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Ninety-eight years ago an important event took place in the history of mankind: the independence of the republic of Albania. After 500 years of Ottoman domination, an independent Albania was proclaimed on November 28, 1912. The initial sparks of the First Balkan War in 1912 were ignited by the Albanian uprising between 1908 and 1910, which was directed at opposing the Young Turk policies of consolidation of the Ottoman Empire. Following the eventual weakening of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria declared war and sought to aggrandize their respective boundaries on the remaining territories of the empire. Finally, the territorial security of Albania was guaranteed by the great powers in the Treaty of London.

Albania, as you know, is a country in southeastern Europe. It is a member of the United Nations, NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the World Trade Organization,

and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and is one of the founding members of the Union for the Mediterranean. Albania has been a potential candidate for accession to the European Union since January, when it formally applied for EU membership.

Mr. Speaker, I've told you earlier who is here today to celebrate the independence day of Albania. Needless to say, we want to congratulate the Albanian community because they've made a tremendous contribution to the growth of this country. Thank you and congratulations.

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Dave Levac: November 22 marked the 77th year of the commemoration of Holodomor, a genocide by famine in Ukraine orchestrated by Joseph Stalin from 1932 to 1933. During this period, existing grain supplies were exported to world markets or kept for their army, and harsh military restrictions prohibited people from travelling to areas where food was plentiful. Up to 10 million people starved to death under Stalin's tyranny. It has been recognized as genocide by Canada, the United Nations and many other countries and organizations around the world.

A great many Ontarians have no personal experience of forced famine or tyranny and no way of knowing the anguish and the chaos that plagued a dictator's time in power. This is why commemorating Holodomor through the efforts of the League of Ukrainian Canadians, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the League of Ukrainian Canadian Women, and through acts of this House, is so very important for us to understand that history.

Last year, I had the honour of being a co-sponsor of the bill that establishes the fourth Saturday of every November as Holodomor Memorial Day. This Saturday, events held around the province will remember the victims, and I invite all who are interested to attend the memorial service at St. Volodymyr's Orthodox church in Toronto from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., and at many other Ukrainian churches across Ontario.

As well, from May 16 to 18, 2011, the League of Ukrainian Canadians will bring their travelling Holodomor education exhibit to Queen's Park, to educate all on the horrors during that dark period in human history.

I say today, again: Never again. Ukraine remembers, and the world acknowledges. Dyakuj.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I beg leave to present a report on the Education Quality and Accountability Office from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Ouellette presents the committee's report and moves the adoption

of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'm very appreciative of the hard work of the members of the committee and recognizing a great deal of the good work that came forward by the committee.

Some of the nine recommendations, or the key ones, were whether the ministry was looking at options other than exempting students from the EQAO testing; and asking for trends for the exempted students in the past five years, to find out those trends.

Not only that, but grade 9 students are starting to realize that there's no reflection for them on their participation in the grade 9 testing, so the committee was asking if the ministry is possibly reviewing a minimum or a maximum percentage of the grade 9 assessment to be included as part of their final report mark.

The final one that I would wish to mention would be that the Ontario English-language and French-language curriculum expectations, and the related EQAO testing, are different and the results are not comparable. Most people don't realize that. These differences are largely unknown to the public and ought to be made clear, and the committee has made recommendations to the ministry as to how they can be made far more clear to the public at large.

With that, I move the adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Standing order 63(a) provides that "the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year."

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries and offices on Wednesday, November 24, 2010, as required by the standing orders of this House and by order of the House dated Tuesday, October 26, 2010, pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Cabinet Office are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

S.L. McNALLY CONSULTING SERVICES INC. ACT, 2010

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr40, An Act to revive S.L. McNally Consulting Services Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition from the Thunder Bay area to do with support for paved shoulders on provincial highways. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

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"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I've signed this petition.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. David Caplan: I have a petition signed by Diane Cartwright, a resident of Don Valley East. It's a petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA, and it reads as follows:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution

tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I have signed the petition.

HOME CARE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Davenport.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was kind of hesitant in getting up here right now because so many others are reading petitions.

I received this petition from a William Diaz. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for seniors, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas seniors who are disabled and/or ill are presently suffering at home; and

"Whereas the cost of a caregiver on a monthly basis who looks after a senior in their own home is around \$1,200, including room and board; and

"Whereas the cost of taking care of someone at home is at least 10 times less than the cost of a hospital bed; and

"Whereas most seniors with disabilities and/or illness are crowding an already overburdened health care system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly request that a basic government subsidy be established (based on a doctor's evaluation) which will pay at least a minimum allowance for a caregiver.

"Seniors deserve to live at home as long and as independently as possible."

Since I'm delighted to agree with this petition, I'm certainly signing it, and I'm giving it to Drew here to present to the table

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a select committee be appointed to study the use of non-automobile modes of transportation on highways and private properties in Ontario and to offer recommendations for ensuring the safety of Ontarians who use such modes of transportation.

Specifically, the committee shall investigate and report on strategies for reducing injuries and fatalities

related to the use of bicycles and non-automotive motorized vehicles, such as:

- (1) Imposing minimum age requirements for operators and passengers of non-automobile motorized vehicles;
- (2) Implementing safety training and licensing requirements for operators of non-automobile motorized vehicles;
- (3) Requiring the use of protective equipment for operators and passengers of bicycles and non-automobile motorized vehicles; and
- (4) Creating regulations regarding the appropriate size of certain classes of non-automobile motorized vehicles relative to operators and passengers.

The committee shall have the authority to conduct hearings, undertake research and do anything else it considers relevant to developing a strategy for reducing injuries and fatalities related to the use of non-automobile modes of transportation in Ontario.

The committee shall be composed of members representing all geographic regions of the province of Ontario.

The committee shall present a final report by no later than May 31, 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Jaczek moves private member's notice of motion number 54. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: At the outset, it's a great pleasure to introduce to members of this House Dr. Charles Tator, a professor of neurosurgery at the University of Toronto. Dr. Tator has great interest, in particular, in head injury. I had the privilege of assisting him in the operating room more years ago than I care to remember.

I am very, very pleased to bring this important issue of safety to this House and to suggest a way we can prevent injury and fatality from non-automobile vehicles. First of all, I'm going to give you some alarming statistics on the incidents of injuries and fatalities.

Every week, over 150 people, on average, are hospitalized or visit emergency rooms as a result of injuries incurred on all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles in Ontario. According to Ontario Injury Prevention, the same goes for a staggering 550 cyclists. Of these 550 cyclists, a quarter of the emergency department visits in Ontario are to treat head trauma, which can lead to death or serious impairment.

The safety of motorcycles in this province is also a major concern. In 2006, 48 motorcyclists were killed and over 1,200 were injured. In the very same year, five passengers were killed and 352 were injured. Injuries on these kinds of vehicles are incurred, to a large extent, by the younger population, and the situation is becoming increasingly worrisome.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, hospitalizations for ATV injuries in Canada increased by 66% in the last 10 years, and teens and adults are at the highest risk.

According to the Journal of Pediatric Surgery, as of 2006, nearly half of ATV-related injuries and over 35% of ATV-related fatalities in Canada are incurred by persons 16 years of age and younger. In 2007, one child

died as a result of an ATV accident in Ontario. In 2008, nine children passed away as a result of an ATV accident.

Children are also a vulnerable group on snowmobiles. In Ontario, there is an average of four yearly child fatalities due to snowmobile accidents.

With these facts in mind, it is my firm belief that we need to examine Ontario's regulations pertaining to safety on non-automobile vehicles, including bicycles, motorcycles, ATVs and snowmobiles.

There is considerable variation across Canada, and we need to examine which practices lead to the most reduction in injury and fatality. I believe the best way to do this is through the mechanism of a select committee process, one that worked so well for the recent study of mental health and addictions. As a member of that committee, I can attest to the fact that, over the 18 months we were together studying that particular issue, we looked at the research, we studied other jurisdictions, we came together in a non-partisan fashion and we were able to table in this Legislature a report with some 23 recommendations, which our government is certainly looking at very seriously.

Through public hearings, a select committee will allow stakeholders from various organizations and interest groups, as well as individuals from across Ontario, to give their opinions on the issues. It will help to remove partisanship from this potentially polarizing subject and allow us to find a solution that all parties can support. It will allow representation from all regions, including rural areas and the north, where ATVs and snowmobiles are important modes of transportation. Its purpose will be to consult, deliberate and report, but not to legislate. Its report will be tabled in the Legislature for consideration by the government.

I believe this process is preferable to attempts by members to bring in private members' bills on specific safety issues. Fifty minutes is usually insufficient time for a full discussion of an issue and is insufficient, as we have seen, to convince the government to allow the bill to proceed to a standing committee. We've seen several attempts in this regard related to vehicle safety, notably Mr. Milloy's Bill 129 in the 38th Parliament, to mandate helmet use on bicycles and other conveyances. We also have the member from Parkdale-High Park's Bill 74 on the safe passing of cyclists, to provide police with both educational and enforcement tools to reduce injury. My own Bill 117 to restrict the age of child passengers on motorcycles was another example. I think a more comprehensive approach such as what I'm suggesting will serve Ontarians better.

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After the dust had settled on my own private member's bill restricting the age of passengers on motorcycles, I certainly heard from many stakeholders some very interesting ideas to improve the safety of passengers on motorcycles. These included licensing changes, opportunities for more training and protective clothing. These are all areas that I think deserve further consideration.

I would also like to make it clear that in this resolution I am in no way prejudging the outcome of the committee's deliberations. It is entirely possible that in some areas our existing provisions are appropriate and no change is necessary.

However, recently the Canadian Pediatric Society has been publishing an annual report entitled "Are We Doing Enough?" which has served to spotlight how provinces and territories are doing in specific areas of public policy and children's health, and ATV safety has been one of those issues. In the 2009 report, Ontario was rated fair, while Quebec was rated excellent for having specific regulations regarding minimum age and mandatory use of helmets. As Dr. Hirokita Yamashiro, president of the Pediatricians Alliance of Ontario as well as chair of the pediatrics section of the Ontario Medical Association, stated in his letter to me, "Ontario can do better in this area."

I'm suggesting that some specific areas should receive special attention, but attention certainly need not be limited to these particular areas. The ones I'm suggesting are: imposing minimum age requirements for operators and passengers, implementing safety training and licensing requirements for operators, requiring the use of protective equipment for operators and passengers, and creating regulations regarding the appropriate size of certain classes of non-automobile motorized vehicles relative to operators and passengers.

Just to illustrate some of the variability in our regulations in Canada, consider the following. In Ontario, the operation of an ATV on a highway requires the operator to possess a motor vehicle licence and therefore be at least 16 years of age. However, children under the age of 12 can operate an ATV on private property, if supervised, and children 12 to 16 can operate an ATV on private property without supervision. Ontario is about the only jurisdiction in Canada where the use of an ATV is permitted under the age of 14.

Turning to snowmobiles, to operate a snowmobile on public property you must have an Ontario driver's licence of any class or have a motorized snow vehicle operator's licence. Children between the ages of 12 and 16 must complete a safety training and education course to be eligible to operate a snowmobile on public roadways. However, there's no age requirement to operate a snowmobile in Ontario as long as you're on private property.

In Saskatchewan, the operator of a snowmobile must be at least 12 years of age, and young operators are required to pass an approved safety training course. Quebec does not generally permit snowmobiles to be operated by persons under 14 years of age and requires persons younger than 16 years old to carry a certificate of competence. PEI has regulations that apply to the use of snowmobiles on private property as well as public property.

Another controversial area is helmet use by bicyclists. BC, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI all have mandatory helmet legislation for cyclists of all ages. In Ontario, it is only mandatory for a child under the age of

18 to be wearing a helmet when riding a bicycle. Is helmet use the best way to reduce head injury, or is the member for Parkdale-High Park's proposal the best way to proceed? In fact, helmets are only required when using an ATV or snowmobile on either highways or public land. No legislation exists mandating that Ontarians use helmets when operating these vehicles on private property.

In another area, Ontario has no regulations at all regarding the size of an ATV that an individual is permitted to use, relative to the individual's own size. Given that one of the major concerns regarding children's use of ATVs is that they lack the strength and dexterity to operate a large vehicle, this seems to be an oversight. Quebec has enacted legislation restricting individuals, especially younger ones, from operating vehicles that are too large or too powerful for their size.

In summary, there is a mind-boggling variation in regulations across the country, and analysis of injury rates in these jurisdictions should be very revealing and could guide the select committee's recommendations.

There are also new products coming to market that need consideration. I was pleased to receive an endorsement from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. As they point out, "Consumers have more choice about motorized transportation, and as new products are introduced, it's important that we consider the safety and training implications." It was recently brought to my attention that motorized bicycles are being advertised for sale on the Danforth here in Toronto with the following inducement in the store window: "No Insurance, No Licence, No Plate. Just Drive." We need to analyze these products from the safety perspective.

My goal in presenting this information has not been to demonstrate that we need a specific regime or framework of amendments to safety regulations. Rather, my objective is to demonstrate that there are sizable gaps in our regulatory framework that deserve to be addressed. Preventable injuries and fatalities are occurring every day in Ontario. A select committee should be established to study these issues, ensuring that multiple perspectives be addressed.

I would like to close by quoting Dave Blackmore, president of the York region head injury support group, who states, "The majority of our members being acquired brain injury survivors, caregivers or professionals actively working in the field of brain injury are in a position to see daily the devastating effects the lack of safety precautions can have, not only on the individuals involved but on the cost to society in general."

I would urge all members of this House to support my private member's resolution in order to do all we can to maximize the health and safety of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to join the debate on this resolution, which is calling for the appointment of a select committee to study the use of non-automobile modes of transportation on highways and private properties in Ontario. I guess, right there, I find it

interesting that the recommendation is that we would look not only at our highways, which are public, but also at the private domain of residents in the province of Ontario.

I agree that we need to make sure we do everything we can to keep people safe in this province, and certainly the PC caucus does support all substantive and practical measures that are going to reduce the incidence of injuries and fatalities related to any mode of transportation.

Take a look at what we've already seen in the province of Ontario. We know, for example, that my colleague MPP Norm Miller recently brought forward Bill 100, which attempts to ensure that people are kept safe on our highways. It requires a metre-wide paved shoulder for pedestrians and cyclists on designated secondary provincial highways where construction must occur when the highway or a portion of it is significantly repaved or surfaced.

I would support that initiative, as do many of my constituents, because it is a practical and proven road safety measure that will reduce injuries and fatalities. In fact, some years ago it was another one of our PC colleagues, former London MPP Dianne Cunningham, who very, very passionately and very strongly championed Ontario's bicycle helmet law. Of course, that was passed and we know that that has substantially reduced the incidence of injuries and fatalities related to that mode of travel.

So we do support all substantive and practical measures that will reduce the incidence of injuries and fatalities related to any mode of transportation. I would hope that when we come to vote on Bill 100, we could get support in this House.

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Having said that, I do believe there is one area where obviously there are some concerns about safety, and that is related to ATVs. Certainly, these all-terrain vehicles have become popular in recent years. In fact, as of 2004, there are about 2.5 million Canadians who were enjoying ATVs, and some of the statistics related to injuries are quite shocking. Obviously, we need to take a look at that issue, because predominantly it's children who suffer the injuries, and we have the statistics that would indicate that. Also, a disproportionate percentage of those who die are children as well. So that is an issue that certainly we need to take a look at the some point in time.

ThinkFirst, a brain and spinal chord injury prevention organization, has recommended that the minimum age to operate an ATV should be raised from 12 to 16, and they support that people should wear a helmet.

There are issues to be addressed, and action has already been taken, but I just could not support another committee at this point in time. We just need to keep moving forward and addressing the current issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to rise in this House representing the people of Parkdale-High Park, an urban riding, so I'm going to be focused on

some urban issues regarding non-automobile transportation.

I want to say first and foremost that, absolutely, I and we in the New Democratic Party support the member from Oak Ridges-Markham in this. We think the work that was done by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions was excellent. It was one of those rare non-partisan moments in this House where very good work got done. The only problem we have with the results of that committee's work is that the government hasn't acted. One recommendation has come before this House of the 23. That's the sad reality. Certainly, we support select committees and their work, and this would be a good one. The question is, would it be a waste of time—I hate to say it that way—when it comes to the House, when their own government doesn't act on their own recommendations?

I remember very well the very first time I got on a bike as a child in the city of Toronto. My family lived on Bedford Road. We were about a block and a half north of Bloor Street in those days. The house doesn't exist anymore because a subway is now built where the house once stood. But I remember getting on a bike and not quite knowing how to brake or stop and then hurtling towards Bloor Street, which then, as now, was a four-lane transportation mode. My mother, of, course screamed. That was my introduction to cycling in Toronto. I think I managed to throw the bike on its side on a front lawn and saved myself.

Quite frankly, cycling hasn't become much safer in the city of Toronto. We have bike lanes—that's a good thing—but we don't have designated bike lanes, the kind of bike lanes they have, for example, in a cycling city like Amsterdam or Copenhagen, where it's simply impossible for a car to swerve into that lane. We don't have that kind of structure. So, really, almost all the cyclists I know who cycle as their main and often only means of transportation around the city of Toronto have had injuries of one sort or another, and we know that there are many fatalities.

A select committee would look at that. Hopefully, a select committee would put into place in law some very good bills that are before this House. The member from Oak Ridges-Markham mentioned two of them. I'd just like to bring the attention of the folks at home to those two, because both of them are excellent.

One is by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who's asking that there be paved shoulders on highways—this would, of course, be outside of cities—so that cyclists, cross-country cyclists, cyclists for distance cycling, can travel safely on most of the roadways of Ontario. This makes great sense, especially if there's roadwork being done anyway, and you're looking at making the roads safer as you're doing the roadwork. Let's pass Norm Miller's bill.

My bill, which I think is, again, a no-brainer—very obvious, common sense, and which just passed in Nova Scotia. Thank you, Nova Scotia. On November 15, they essentially passed my bill, which requires that cars over-

taking cyclists give at least a metre—it's called the three-foot rule throughout the United States, but here at least one metre—in overtaking a cyclist. There are fines imposed if you don't do that.

Every day, as I drive home—unfortunately, still driving—from Queen's Park to my home along Harbord Street, dozens of cyclists pass me by and I see dozens of infractions of this bill.

In fact, this bill was supported by the Toronto police, many of whom are on cycles themselves. We forget that people work on non-automotive modes of transportation. Imagine being a police officer on a cycle all day long. Of course you become attuned to the safety of cyclists if you are, and they have. They came out and supported this bill when we launched it, as have all of the cyclist unions, again calling upon the government, so far in vain, to take some action.

I commend the member for her comments also. I noted perhaps just a touch of frustration about the private member's bill process in this House. Trust me, as a member of the third party I feel a great deal of frustration about the private member's bill process in this House, and I hear that frustration from stakeholders, because we on this side of the House know that in seven years, this government has never passed one single private member's bill coming from opposition quarters; in fact, even 90% of their own private members' bills die on the order paper or die in committee.

That's not really consultative government. Stakeholders understand that and, quite frankly, stakeholders have very little patience for the kind of partisan political posturing that happens in this place. You know, we're without egos some days in the opposition benches. We don't care if our name is attached to the bill as long as the bill becomes law. But even when they do that, and that has certainly happened, that the government has acted on recommendations of opposition members and brought in their own bill, very little thanks is given. In fact, usually the name of the person who originated the bill from this side of the floor isn't acknowledged. That's sad, and people pick up on that. Perhaps it's partly responsible for the huge fall in the polls of the Liberal Party in this province. People get that this is not a government that listens. You know, to be a government, you need to listen and you need to adjust your policies when your policies aren't meeting with approval, and you need to respond when you hear good ideas from the other side of the floor. That's just common sense; that's good government.

I note with a bit of a smile that the member from Oak Ridges–Markham has said that this committee shall present a final report no later than May 31, 2011, while the House may not be sitting—it probably won't be sitting then—and of course we'll be reconvening after an election. So I think she also is suggesting that perhaps another government might go where this government isn't willing to go and actually pass the recommendations of such a select committee.

Be that as it may, I'm going to leave some time for the member from Timmins–James Bay. He's going to talk

about what it's like on the roads up in his neck of the woods, literally. But suffice to say I'm going to support the bill. A select committee does good work, but its work is only worth it if the government acts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I am pleased to rise today to support the resolution of my colleague, a motion to strike a select committee on non-automotive modes of transportation by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. The member has put forward a private member's resolution that a select committee be appointed to study the use of such modes of transportation and report back to the House with recommendations as to how to make the use of these vehicles safer for all Ontarians. I wholeheartedly support this resolution, especially as it deals with the safety of our residents and Ontarians as a whole.

Let me first commend my colleague, who as a former medical officer of health has shown and demonstrated to all of us a very strong interest over time on public safety, especially when it comes to some of these vehicles.

I want to speak about the select committee process altogether. As we know, a select committee is set up by the House to investigate and report back on a specified matter of interest for a specified period of time. I believe my colleague has done so in her resolution.

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I also want to speak to the select committee because, as all of you know, I had the opportunity to serve with my colleague for the last 18 months on the committee on mental health and addictions. This committee was struck by the House to review mental health and addiction and come forward with a strategy. It was a motion by my colleague from the PC government that brought us altogether. Our mandate was to study and provide recommendations to develop a comprehensive provincial mental health and addictions strategy.

I want to commend the members of that committee and the staff that worked with us because it was truly what I would call teamwork. Those of us who served on that committee were all committed to the job that was given to us by the House. I was very impressed by how my colleagues went to work and rolled up their sleeves. We travelled the province and listened to people from all walks of life about the issues of mental health. I think, at the end of the day, we did what was expected of us. I have to say that the work that the committee did and submitted to the House—my office has received commendations from several places, from many of the stakeholders who presented in front of us and some of those who read the report after the fact, as to the work of the committee being very comprehensive and non-partisan; that we had a good foothold of what the issues were and that we came forward with the recommendations that they thought were very good.

I have to say that sometimes when you have an issue like the one my colleague is bringing forward to us, it is probably better to have people on a select committee from various backgrounds to take a look at the issue—

from public safety, from the medical community, from the transportation community and from the industry that manufactures and sells these vehicles. Then you would have people who are not tied to that mode of transportation or who use it, who may have a bias towards one opinion or another.

I'm all in favour of us striking this committee and moving forward with it as quickly as possible. I think you will probably find that if the committee is allowed to do its work, like the mental health and addictions strategy committee, this House will probably receive something that will deal with public safety in a wide variety of ways that probably are best for all residents of Ontario, because they will be able to do that without any partisan issues, without any biases etc.

I want to commend my colleague for bringing this motion forward. I think it's a good one. She has given the recommendation that the committee meet and report back early next year. I think that would give the House adequate time to deal with the issue. It's not something that the House has to move on right away, but at least it will give the Minister of Transportation food for thought.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Etobicoke Centre—Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Possibly after the merger of ridings, it will expand to include Centre, but for now it is Etobicoke North.

I'm privileged to speak in a number of different capacities, not only on a personal and parliamentary basis but also as a physician. I would wholeheartedly support my colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek, as you know a former medical officer of health and now the MPP for Oak Ridges—Markham.

At the outset I would like to call the attention of this House and of yourself and of the people of Ontario to the presence of easily one of the most distinguished physicians in Ontario, the honourable Dr. Charles Tator. Dr. Tator has been a guiding light in neurosurgery, in brain surgery, in spinal cord injury management and in head injury management for many years. I can attest to this, first of all, specifically because at the end of the first year of medical school—once upon a time, which would have been, in my case, 1985—I had the privilege of winning a Medical Research Council—MRC—scholarship in which I spent three months under Dr. Charles Tator at the Playfair neuroscience unit and at the Toronto Western Hospital. I can tell you that the elegance and the energy and the dedication and the compassion that he brought, not only to teaching us, his students, but also in the broader framework of legislators and decision-makers, was something that was really to be remarked. Clearly, this is an individual whose probably every last word governments should rush to implement.

I remember, for example, not too long ago, a couple of years ago, when we were with the Honourable Jim Watson, now His Worship the mayor of Ottawa. We were in the riding of Etobicoke North, at the Elmbank Community Centre, Dr. Tator will recall, where we were

actually distributing helmets, courtesy of the government of Ontario, to young folks and basically using that as a media opportunity to emphasize the issue of head injury, because Dr. Tator is literally one of the world's leading experts on head injury management.

So I would clearly support my colleague Dr. Jaczek for bringing forward this particular resolution, which, as you will know, is a proposal to create a select committee to study modes of transportation, such as all-terrain vehicles, or ATVs, snowmobiles, non-automotive motorized vehicles, motorcycles, scooters and so on.

It's clear, from those of us who have been watching this particular area develop over time, that as vehicles and modes of recreation get a little bit more exotic and people who may not be necessarily properly trained to use them—for example, a bunch of kids who are out for a joyride—they're leading to, unfortunately, more and more debilitating injury.

These are very serious injuries. There are very few parts of the human body that are perhaps as unforgiving as a brain injury. I mean, there's talk now that we can regenerate and graft skin. Kidneys, you've got two; eyes, you've got two. The heart muscle—maybe some other parts of the heart will take over. But if you actually breach the cranial vault, which is a very strong, probably the strongest, measurable bone mass in the body, if you actually break that and go into the very soft tissue of the brain, for now, anyway, there isn't a major amount that one can do, even in medical science, to this day. Yes, we can rehab the person; we can help them to retrain, maybe, if they lose, for example, language skills or fine motor skills. Perhaps we can retrain them, rehabilitate them, but for a large part, that part of the brain tissue is actually gone. That's, of course, one of the tragedies that we see on a regular basis as physicians. In particular, unfortunately, we're seeing more and more individuals, particularly kids and folks in general, who are suffering debilitating brain injuries.

For example, something on the order of about 150 people, on average, are hospitalized or visit emergency rooms every week because of injuries on all-terrain vehicles, ATVs, and snowmobiles in Ontario. We know, for example, that 550 cyclists—they actually have similar numbers, and these can be sometimes life-threatening, but also life-quality-threatening. As Dr. Tator will tell you, the brain is a very fine and delicate organ. Even a slight amount of injury or chronic abuse can lead to the loss of many, many different things, whether it's things like the sense of smell, part of sight, language, even a certain amount of your vocabulary, memories and so on. These are things that doctors see on a very regular basis.

I'm pleased also that Dr. Helena Jaczek, our MPP from Oak Ridges—Markham, who is bringing forward this particular resolution, has certainly done the due diligence and has acquired ringing endorsements, resounding endorsements, from the Ontario Medical Association and the Pediatricians Alliance of Ontario. I have, for example, here in my possession a letter of endorsement from Dr. Yamashiro, who is the president of the

Pediatricians Alliance of Ontario and the chair of the pediatric medicine section at the Ontario Medical Association. As you'll know, this is an organization that represents more than 1,000 pediatricians across Ontario. They, of course, are particularly empowered and charged with the responsibility of dealing with preventable childhood injuries, and they lend their very important full academic and medical support to this particular resolution bringing forward the select committee.

1400

In conclusion, I would say that it's a very important area. It's a progressive area that Ontario needs to remedy—what is, up till now, a patchwork of legislation which contains the framework for this particular area with reference to head injuries and ATVs and other vehicles. I would say, certainly in the presence of one of my former professors and, as I say, one of the leaders of neurosurgical management, it deserves to be passed immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a few minutes to speak to this resolution. I likely won't get the time to say all that I would like to.

I'm sure that the member from Oak Ridges–Markham means well and is genuinely concerned, but I would also say that you can't legislate common sense. It's interesting to note that the more remote areas you get into, the further north you get, the less the rules that we do have are applied. If you get to a remote First Nation, for example, you're hard-pressed to find a helmet on an ATV, period, anywhere, from my experience being in places like Attawapiskat, in rural and northern Ontario. As I say, the rules that we do have in place are not necessarily enforced for numbers of people on ATVs etc.

I would simply say I'm hearing—to do with ATVs, UTVs—more about access issues. I wanted to get on the record this letter from a constituent of mine who writes to me about access for UTVs:

“To Mr. Norm Miller:

“It was suggested that I contact you regarding a problem that I have. As the result of an accident, I am a disabled person. To try and maintain the quality of life that I used to have, I was supplied with a UTV [side by side] for recreational purposes. My insurance company stated that a UTV was safer than an ATV. In 2003, when the regulations regarding ATVs were introduced, UTVs did not exist. As a result, UTVs have a very limited use and there are no exceptions for disabled people. If UTVs were classified the same as ATVs then I would be able to travel the same areas that ATVs are allowed to use. As it is now, I cannot drive on any roads or in any towns that allow the use of ATVs, even though I must license and insure my UTV the same as an ATV. Your attention to this problem would be appreciated.”

I've had other letters concerned with that issue. There are very specific rules about the traditional ATV—one person straddled, and also allow them on the shoulders of some provincial highways and municipalities. But more

and more people, older people in particular, are using these side-by-side UTVs and they're not able to get access.

I would simply say in the minute and a half I have left that a practical measure this House could take would be to support my private member's bill, Bill 100, which would require the paving of provincial highways when they're rebuilt. I note from the Share the Road papers that they say 60% of Ontarians say they would prefer to cycle more often, and they indicate the primary reason they do not ride more often is they are worried about safety on the road. Another main reason is that there are not enough bike routes to get to where they want to go.

Just yesterday, I received a letter from Public Health, Grey Bruce Health Unit, regarding support for Bill 100 paved shoulders:

“The Grey Bruce Health Unit protects and promotes health for the residents of the 17 municipalities that comprise the counties of Grey and Bruce. As one of 36 health units for Ontario, we are mandated by the Ontario public health standards to address the determinants of health, including the physical environments in which our residents live, work, learn and play.

“With respect to the influence of active transportation on health, the Board of Health for the Grey Bruce Health Unit supports private member's Bill 100, Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Amendment Act, 2010, which calls for paved shoulders on provincial highways and the associated signage that warn vehicles of their requirement to share the road with pedestrians and cyclists....”

“We encourage the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt Bill 100 as the next step in developing a provincial transportation system that encourages and supports active modes of transportation.”

That's signed by Hazel Lynn, medical officer of health, and Bob Pringle, chair of the board.

Unfortunately, I'm out of time. There are a few other points I wanted to make, but I wanted to get that on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just before I confuse people, I want to say that my whole purpose of this debate will be to confuse people, because I want to speak pro, but I also want to put a caution out there and I want the member to understand what I say.

First of all, I understand what you're doing. There was a member in this House, Dianne Cunningham, who, back in about 1991 or 1992, brought a bill to the House that was a very simple premise: that all kids who were using bicycles should wear a bicycle helmet. I remember in that debate that for a number of members, although they voted in favour, there was a lot of trepidation because, “Maybe we're stepping onto people's ability to make up their own minds,” and discussion about how individual responsibility is not taken as seriously as it needs to be. But I would argue that Dianne Cunningham's bill, which was passed under the NDP government as a private

member's bill because we allowed her to take credit for it, saved lives. I think there are people alive today as a result of that bill, and so I understand what you are trying to do. I don't want to minimize it in any way, but I want to raise a couple of flags.

First of all, I want to say I understand, also from a safety perspective—there was a young man killed in Moonbeam four, five, six years ago, a young man who was five or six years old, as a result of driving on an ATV. He did what every other kid does responsibly; it's never an issue. It has been done 110 times before. This poor young child got on the ATV, didn't have a helmet, went flying off the bike and got killed. The family, unfortunately, and the community still live with that every day. So I understand what you're trying to do: You're trying to make sure that those kinds of tragedies don't happen.

At the same time, we need to make sure that we don't restrict it so much that we make it impossible for young people to be able to use skidoos, ATVs and other devices that we use not just in places like northern Ontario, but in southwestern Ontario and others, because there are a lot of responsible operators and parents out there who are trying to do the right thing.

I'll just give you a couple of quick examples. One is in the Far North, on-reserve, the only method of transportation is ATV or skidoo. Far too often, young people way below the age of 16 are driving ATVs and skidoos, not because it's just something to have fun with, but because it's the only means of transportation. So we don't want to have a law enacted as a result of all of this that would make it impossible for a young person who's 11 or 12 years old to get on the skidoo and help their parents with the trapping, with the hunting and gathering or to move from point A to point B inside the community on an ATV or bike. I don't think that's your intention, and I'm certainly supportive knowing that, but I just want to put on the record now that we need to make sure that we do this in some way that's sensitive to some of the realities out there.

The other thing—and I just want to speak very quickly—is parental responsibility. I, like you, believe that most parents are extremely responsible and that we don't want to put our children in harm's way. So when we give our children the ability to get on that bicycle for the first time, we properly school them in the safety of utilizing a bicycle and putting on a helmet, having trainer wheels if necessary, probably longer than they'd like to have them. Eventually, when they move up to the ATV and the skidoo, it's with mom or dad or big brother or uncle or aunt with them to make sure that they're doing it responsibly, so that we know when they take that skidoo out the first time, when they're 10, 11, 12 years old, they understand what the skidoo is. It's not a toy. This thing can kill you. I just know that with all of my friends and family, in my experience growing up as a young boy up in northern Ontario, those things were drilled into us and are still drilled into our children, because no parent wants to put their child in harm's way.

I think the debate is a good one. I think the idea of a committee looking at what we can do to make it safer—and I only make this argument that parental responsibility has to be part of it. I don't think we can legislate these problems away. I don't think it's as simple as saying that we're going to pass a law, and all of a sudden everybody is going to be safer because we've said you can't do this until a certain age, that a certain requirement is needed and that a helmet must be worn etc. There is a certain responsibility that we need to take as individuals, first of all as young people, when we're 9, 10, 11 or 12 years old, in getting on these motorized or non-motorized vehicles. We as parents need to ensure that we know that they are instilled with the values and the knowledge that what they're doing is dangerous if not done properly.

I end on this one: I have a grandson who's two years and a bit, Nathaniel; a nice little boy. I bought him an electric ATV that does about a kilometre an hour, but I put a big stepladder across the driveway, so nobody can drive into my driveway at the cottage when he's using it, and there's always somebody there watching.

So we understand that kids are going to do this and we have to instil in them the responsibility that they need to do it safely, but I think the review is a good idea and as long as we do it in the context of that, I think it's a good idea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1410

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise and debate on this proposal as well. I do understand the motivation behind the honourable member bringing this proposal forward. I will not be supporting the proposal for a select committee, and the reason is very straightforward: I am getting more and more frustrated with this government giving us a smoke-and-mirrors type of government. They bring forward resolutions, they bring forward private members' business, they even bring forward government legislation that, in concept, appears to be in the public interest, are good ideas, are welcomed by the public, get media headlines, and then they do nothing. I'm just simply not willing to play that game anymore.

I believe that if this government were serious about safety and road safety issues, then they would pass the bill that was proposed here by my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka. That is a bill that has been proven—we need no more committees to prove the importance of his bill, which would provide for extended shoulders on highways to accommodate cycling.

This government would also pass the bill that was proposed by my colleague Ms. DiNovo. That is a common sense measure that has been before the House. It's available for implementation, but it's being ignored by this government as well.

Time and time again, we have good, sound proposals that come before this House. We go through the ropes. We jump through the hoops. The public releases are put out. Media conferences are held. Everyone applauds themselves, pats themselves on the back, and the govern-

ment does nothing. The last thing we need is one more committee to go through the hoops and the end result is nothing. I just won't participate in that.

I do want, however, to point attention to an excellent research document that has already been prepared, that is available to the member, and it was prepared by Share the Road Cycling Coalition—extensive research from jurisdictions around the world. I have here all of the recommendations. They number about 20 specific proposals that, should the government wish to implement them, are available. Stakeholders from across the province, from across the country, support them. We need not tie up another committee or create another committee to do that. Let's just take the information that's available to us, implement it and get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Oak Ridges–Markham has two minutes for her response.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to certainly acknowledge the comments made by my colleagues from Kitchener–Waterloo, Parkdale–High Park, Scarborough–Rouge River, Etobicoke North, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Timmins–James Bay, and Newmarket–Aurora. I'd also like to acknowledge the presence—I believe he's still here—of Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League, who has, again, endorsed this particular resolution.

I must say that I'm a little disappointed and surprised that the PC caucus wishes to continue to have a piecemeal approach to what I think is a complicated issue in terms of injury prevention.

The member for Timmins–James Bay, I think, brought his perspective very clearly. What he had to say is the sort of thing that I would anticipate a select committee would be hearing: It would be hearing a diversity of views, and I truly believe the more inputs you have into decisions, the better they are.

Just to, yet again, remind the members—and I'll quote from a letter from the Insurance Bureau of Canada: "The Ministry of Transportation's annual road safety report shows startling statistics when it comes to injury and fatalities resulting from non-automobile accidents. These numbers climb higher each year."

An American study published in 2007 showed an increase of 86% in children's injuries from non-automobile motorized vehicle accidents in just 13 years.

It is certainly time to look at the issue in a comprehensive way. I do not believe a piecemeal approach would serve Ontarians well. We need to look at a whole range of circumstances, particular vehicles, other jurisdictions, to make a really reasoned, focused approach on this extremely important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Ms. Jaczek's resolution in about 100 minutes.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Mauro: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the insurance industry should provide premium

reductions to Ontario drivers who equip their vehicles with winter tires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Mauro moves private member's notice of motion number 56. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Before I begin, I'd like to introduce a few people who are with us here in the members' east gallery: Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League, Faye Lyons and Christine Hogarth from CAA, and I believe we have Joe Belfontaine from Canadian Tire. Have I got that right? Thank you for being here.

At first blush, I suppose it might seem to people that as a northern member I'm bringing only a northern Ontario perspective to this debate in this motion I've introduced. Absolutely, it's an issue in northern Ontario where the weather can be different, but hopefully people won't view it that way. I've just had a discussion with a colleague of mine here right now from southern Ontario, who has two or three vehicles, and all of them have winter tires on for a very good reason.

When I first tabled this motion back on November 3, in my context, in Thunder Bay, the weather was still very mild; in fact, up until about November 10, if you wanted to be a bit hardy and put on a sweater, you could have gone out and played golf had a golf course still been open. We had wonderful weather. But, of course, it's still Canada and still northern Ontario, and the weather does change. Predictably, it comes. In the last week and a half or so, in Thunder Bay, in northwestern Ontario, we've had some pretty significant weather events, and unfortunately, already the accidents have begun and there have already been deaths in Thunder Bay associated with some of these accidents.

I don't know anything about the specifics of those deaths, whether it was just human error, whether it was weather-related or whether in fact some of the people involved in those accidents might have already had winter tires on. I don't know anything about the specifics of them, but I think what we do know and what we can say with absolute certainty is that if people were using winter tires, the likelihood of death and the likelihood of accidents would be greatly reduced.

The problem is that for many people, winter tires are cost-prohibitive. They can in fact be very expensive, and the point of the motion is to try and incent a discussion and a debate to get people to pick up the phone when you're renewing your premium and to ask your insurance company, through your broker, if they're going to offer you an incentive because you've got winter tires on your vehicles. It's a win-win for everybody.

Before I go on a little bit, I often think about the word we use to describe fatalities or just mishaps. We call them accidents, and I guess they're accidents insofar as they're not predictable. We don't know when it's going to happen, where it's going to happen and who it's going to happen to, but we know that it is going to happen to somebody somewhere, sometime. So they're predictable in that sense. We know that whether it's on the 401 down

here—even if it's on a sunny, balmy day—or on a highway in northwestern Ontario or around Thunder Bay on a wintry day or on a balmy day, these mishaps are going to occur. So it is predictable to some degree—we know that—and what can we do to try and mitigate against the loss of life and the cost to people?

We just had a discussion with Brian, up here from the Ontario Safety League. One of the numbers that they will use is that if 500 accidents that result in significant trauma to people could be avoided, there would be a resulting savings of \$15 million to \$20 million—I think you were saying, Brian—to the health care system in the province of Ontario. But it's about saving lives, right?

1420

Some have suggested we should go a bit further: The government should get involved, and it should be a government rebate program. If you're going to use winter tires, the government should give you some money back. I'm not saying that's the worst idea either. I could perhaps be convinced to consider that. But for me this is pretty clear: The insurance industry is a winner. I listened to some of the comments across the floor in the earlier debate, and there's a bit of overlap in terms of where the government should be involved and where the government shouldn't be involved and maybe there's a bit too much Big Brother going on with some of these debates.

Sure the government could offer rebates to people if they purchase winter tires, but I think the insurance industry should be the one that does this. For them, it will absolutely result in fewer claims and it will absolutely result in fewer costs. There should be a win-win cost-benefit analysis of this—I think the results are obvious. I don't think you even have to do it; people know. For the insurance companies, it means fewer claims and fewer costs; for the people on the other end, it means lower premiums; and at the end of the day, it means saving lives, saving injury and saving devastation.

In northern Ontario, I'm proud to say that through our government there have already been significant investments around this issue that I think go a way to mitigating against some accidents. The northern highways program under our government has reached record levels of investment. I think we're somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$750 million of investment in northern highways for the last two years, if memory serves me, a dramatic increase from the historic levels of investment in northern highways of, I think, about \$150 million to \$250 million.

We, under this government, have significantly increased those numbers. I can tell you there is a four-laning project under way right now from Nipigon to Thunder Bay, about a 60-mile stretch of highway: long-sought-after four-laning and a significant safety enhancement when it's completed. Those projects have begun; work has begun. That's a dangerous piece of highway.

I can tell you that in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, we had Bob Rosehart, an economic facilitator, draft a report that came forward to our government. I asked him to include in that report similar four-laning from Kakabeka to Shabakwa in my riding. The study has

begun for the potential four-laning in the near future, I hope within 10 years. I'd love to see that begin. The route studies have already begun, and that of course, as a four-laning piece, would be one of the best things we could do. We know those issues are a long way off, but four-lane divided highways are a wonderful thing, and clearly a wonderful way to save lives.

As well, I'd be remiss if I didn't remind people that in 2003, when we first came to government, it was our Liberal government that once again made studded tires legal in northern Ontario. I'm not sure how many people have picked up on that. It's never too late to continue to remind people, if they're interested in that option, that it's out there, it's legal. For a long time it wasn't legal. The biggest concern for people, I suppose it's fair to say, was damage to the highways, but apparently the technology is such now that studded tires do not damage highways in any significant way. So that's out there for people as well.

I think it's important that people who maybe have invested in studded tires ask their insurance companies, when they're talking to them, "Are you going to offer me a premium reduction? I live in an area of the province where the weather conditions are such that traffic accidents are much more likely to occur. Will you offer me a premium reduction if I buy studded tires or if I've already got studded tires, or if I have winter tires?"

I just put a brand new set on my vehicle last week. I got a pretty good price: \$1,000 installed; four tires purchased and installed for a thousand bucks. As explained to me, that wasn't the maximum. That's a lot of money for a lot of people. I would say it's very cost prohibitive for some. Now, if in some way we can get the insurance companies to start offering a reduction on the policy premium to people, I think that more people would likely go out and purchase winter tires.

I'm told there are a couple of companies in Ontario that are currently offering it, one being a Quebec-based company that has a subsidiary in Ontario. I think the premium reductions, as they suggested to me, are 5% or so, which could be \$100 or \$200 for somebody, depending on what your premium is. If you're a male driver under the age of 25 anywhere in this country, you're paying big money to have your car insured. While 5% might sound like not too much, if you're a young male driver anywhere in the country, not just in Ontario, your premiums, whether you've had an accident or not, are pretty steep, and 5% might be a bit of an incentive for that driver or their parents to go out and help them get a set of winter tires.

I'm going to read just a few things for you here that lend some more support—I don't think we need it specifically—and show that there's a lot of support for this idea and that, in fact, they do enhance braking and save lives and make it more likely that a person with winter tires is going to avoid accidents. At the same time, I should say that if I invest in winter tires, not only am I making it safer for myself; I'm making it safer for everybody else on the road, even those people who don't have them.

The CAA has recognized that “Unlike all-season tires”—and I want to raise this point because some people feel that if they have all-season tires, somehow they have made themselves as safe as they can be, but it’s not the case—“severe-condition winter tires ... have tread patterns and rubber that are tailored for colder conditions. And that helps them perform better than all-season tires once temperatures plummet.”

This is from the CBC: “In cold weather, and on ice and snow, winter tires provide more control and stability than all-season tires. The softer rubber compound of modern winter tires can perform in temperatures as cold as minus 40 Celsius before hardening.”

Also, “Tests by Transport Canada and the Canadian rubber association found that all-season tires went off the testing track at speeds of only 40 to 50 kilometres an hour, while cars with winter tires had no difficulty.

“According to the ministry of transportation in Quebec”—this is a Quebec statistic, and I’ll talk a bit more about Quebec in a minute because I’ve got a little bit of time left—“proper winter tires can improve braking by 25%”—what that translates to is about two to three car lengths if you have proper winter tires on—“and improved collision avoidance by 38% when compared with all-season radials.”

The stats are pretty clear. There’s one more I’ll leave you with. During the winter of 2005 in Quebec, the 10% of drivers who did not use winter tires accounted for almost 40% of the accidents in the province.

In Quebec, and some might want to discuss this when the opposition parties and other members of my caucus speak on this, it is mandatory. You do have to have winter tires. It’s the law. I think in 2007 or 2008 they made it the law. What’s important for people to know is that in Quebec at the time that the government of the day made it mandatory, already 80% or 90% of people were voluntarily using winter tires. I guess the climate conditions are significantly different in Quebec than they are in Ontario. I’d have a difficult time making it mandatory in Ontario. It’s not something I would support, forcing people to spend the money. I’m not sure somebody who lives in Windsor or Sarnia, who almost never would need winter tires, would be too interested in whether this government put forward a proposal to make it mandatory. So there is a province that makes it mandatory, but obviously there are significant differences there. The culture that existed in Quebec already was quite remarkable, though, when you think about it: 80% or 90% of people were voluntarily doing it.

My 12 minutes here is up. I just want to close by saying that, ultimately, I’m hoping that people will begin to ask their insurer when they renew their premiums if they will offer them a premium reduction because they’re going to invest in winter tires. If they don’t, shop around. At the end of the day, there is no doubt that this saves lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan has brought forward an interesting resolution

this afternoon: That, in the opinion of this House, the insurance industry should provide premium reductions to Ontario drivers who equip their vehicles with winter tires.

I’m pleased to have the opportunity to join in this debate this afternoon, again, on this resolution that proposes premium reductions for drivers who equip their cars with snow tires.

The resolution suggests that all private insurance companies should provide a discount to drivers who equip their vehicles with snow tires. I think it’s worth noting, though, that there are already insurance companies in Ontario, as I understand it, that offer this discount. Indirectly, this measure would then pressure more Ontarians to equip their vehicles with snow tires.

While this would indeed help to improve safety and help reduce accidents in some situations and in some regions of the province, perhaps, the benefit of snow tires would vary from region to region and from driver to driver. I don’t think it would necessarily ensure that those who equip their vehicle with snow tires would in every case be safer. I don’t think it would necessarily be appropriate that we indirectly penalize those who don’t, especially at a time when families are already feeling financially constrained. The added cost of putting snow tires on a car, as we know, is quite significant.

1430

While snow tires can help to make winter driving safer and can help to prevent accidents in some situations, and I certainly agree that that’s true, this does not mean that winter tires provide a perfect solution to all winter driving problems. While they do, indeed, play an important role in improving safety in winter weather conditions, snow tires alone cannot prevent accidents; drivers must take responsibility for their own driving practices, of course, and habits, and for taking other winter driving precautions in order to ensure their own safety and, of course, the safety of others on the road.

Calling for a province-wide change to the way in which insurance companies do business by providing a premium discount to all drivers in Ontario who equip their vehicles with snow tires, I think, ignores the fact that climate conditions vary greatly across the province. There is, for example, much more snow that lasts much longer in Thunder Bay than there is in Windsor, and, certainly, in downtown Toronto relative to my community of Fergus. This variation means that the added safety benefit of putting snow tires on your car is going to be quite different from one region to another. The fact is that in some parts of Ontario there is not sufficient snowfall to warrant the need for snow tires in every case, whereas in other parts of Ontario, it would be impossible to get by without them. Suggesting then, that across the board, all insurers should offer a discount to all Ontarians who put snow tires on their cars is not commensurate with the reality of the variety of needs throughout the province.

Important questions of safety aside, equipping a car with snow tires is a costly endeavour. To purchase a new

set of snow tires alone will cost a bare minimum of at least \$400, I would estimate, and to have those tires changed would cost around \$100 a year, once you put them on and then have to take them off again. In fact, it costs me more than that when I change my snow tires on my car. And to store tires off-season will probably cost another \$180 per year, we estimate. At a total cost of at least \$680, these costs are not negligible, especially at a time when families are already financially constrained and struggling to make ends meet.

As I've mentioned, there are already some insurance companies in Ontario that do offer a discount to drivers who equip their vehicles with snow tires. Requiring all companies to provide such a discount, however, would, in fact, reduce competitiveness in the insurance market. This competitiveness is what allows insurance companies to keep premiums down, if customers are willing to shop around for rates.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada would not support the kind of measures proposed by this resolution, and would suggest that the decision to offer a discount should be left to individual companies and not regulated by the government. In fact, I have a message we have received from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. I want to point out their position.

"It's important to note that some companies in Ontario currently offer discounts for snow tires for competitive reasons. That's why the Insurance Bureau of Canada encourages consumers to shop around and talk to their insurance professional about their options.

"Installing winter tires can make driving in the winter safer and reduce accidents in some situations. Ontario has a number of different climate conditions across the province—what works in Thunder Bay may not be the best solution for parts of southern Ontario. There are many, many factors that contribute to auto accidents, and we discourage any statement that may give drivers a false sense of security. Installing winter tires will not stop an accident from happening if you don't also winterize your driving habits.

"Most importantly, we believe government requiring private insurers to offer a discount for snow tires goes against the concept of competitive markets. The decision to offer a discount should be left to individual companies and not regulated by the government. As previously mentioned, there are Ontario insurance companies currently providing discounts for snow tires, so obviously, the market is working."

Given these objections, and in spite of the potential safety benefit created by driving with snow tires in the winter, we have reservations about this motion. The decision to offer a discount for snow tires should be left to individual companies. Those who do equip their cars with snow tires have the option, currently, to be insured by a company that does provide such a discount. Compelling companies to provide a discount for snow tires, and indirectly penalizing those who do not equip their car with snow tires, is problematic to say the least.

I would make those comments in a respectful way to the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, ask him to

consider them and, during the course of this debate, ask the other members to consider the views that I've expressed as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to share a few moments of my thoughts on this private members' time opportunity to talk about a motion that, I believe, save and except for the previous speaker gently saying that it's not a bad idea, but then proceeding to say it's not a good idea—I'm telling you that I think it's a good idea. I would ask him to consider possibly the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan—to use the same verbiage in studded tires. We used our government opportunity to present studded tires for the north, I believe, back in 2003 or 2004, where we provided that.

The statistics are available, and contrary to what's been spoken about, we are talking about saving lives. Regardless of whether or not an insurance industry wants to tell you that the way in which you drive your car is the reason why you're getting it in an accident, we have weather. And we have technology that has improved over the decades, on the actual tires themselves, that actually does help to reduce that opportunity to get in an accident. So, quite frankly, it's a bogus argument to simply say that it's the driver all the time. The conditions of our country and our province, particularly in the north but also in the south—and I think we have to be careful not to make assumptions that snow tires on your car should only be put on when you think it might snow. I think it's a benign argument to sit back and say, "I hope it doesn't get too snowy. Therefore, I won't put my snow tires on. I'll leave my all-seasons on." We've got the information about all-seasons; we've got the information about snow tires. It's evident.

Let me share with you, then, some information that the member knows, but I'll make sure I put it on the record, and that's with regard to the statistics. There are approximately 250,000 motor vehicle collisions on Ontario roads every year, about 20,000 of them in northern Ontario. Across Ontario, nearly 65,000 collisions occur during the winter months—maybe it's the conditions of the weather, not just the driver—and in Canada, motor vehicle accidents are responsible for approximately 50% of major injuries and 25% of all injury-related deaths.

The member is asking the industry to give a little break to those who decide that they're going to make the investment into snow tires, as he talks about, and make it a little more appealing to them to say, "You know, if I've got to put out 800 bucks to put snow tires on, and if I'm going to get a little break from the insurance industry"—who, by the way, would have to pay out in their insurance claims. Why would they say, "Don't do snow tires," if it helps them bring down the claim rate, if it helps keeps them safe? Even if there are 50 people out there who get saved by snow tires, that's 50 less people in collisions that the insurance companies have got to take care of. I just don't understand that argument at all. As a matter of fact, it is about safety, and in terms of the

member's thoughtful, pragmatic way of approaching this and not interfering, I believe it's a great idea to challenge the industry to say, "We've got the people now turned onto using snow tires. Let's cut them a break."

I'm in favour of what the member's asking for, I support what the member is talking about, and I encourage all of us to stay away from the concept that it's only the driver's responsibility, and the weather's got nothing to do with it. We've got the technology; the tires are available. Let's make use of it.

I thank the member for bringing up this really good idea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just wondering if my colleague wants me to leave her some time.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A few minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A few minutes. Okay, I will.

I want to take the opportunity to speak to this bill from the perspective of what I guess this is all about. I want to say to the member, I'm trying—you know, I'm going to be partisan; I'm going to be pretty blunt with you, in the sense that I am going to take this to a bit of a partisan level, and I'm sure the honourable member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan is not going to be surprised when I do so.

I asked myself the question, "How many people in his riding and how many people in northern Ontario see this as the number one issue facing the north?" I don't want to minimize that safe driving is not an issue in northern Ontario. I don't want to minimize that this is not a bad idea; in fact, I'm going to vote for it, so I want to tell you up front that I'll actually vote for your motion, because I don't think it's a bad idea. But in the grand scheme of things, I say to myself, "How important is this when it comes to the ranking of issues in northern Ontario?" If Mr. Mauro, as I do, has the opportunity to bring one private member's bill to the House, are there other issues that people in the riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan would rather have the local member speaking on?

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For example, there's a small issue called the economy. I know, in Thunder Bay–Atikokan as in Timmins–James Bay and other ridings across the north, people are worried about what's happening generally when it comes to the economy. We're lucky in Timmins–James Bay: The mining industry has picked up again, and \$1,400 gold does a lot to turn marginal waste into ore so that you can actually make some money. But there are many communities out there hurting. You look at communities like Smooth Rock Falls, communities like Kapuskasing, Opasatika, Hearst, and others who are, because of OPG investments, doing a little bit better, and actually doing quite a lot better in Kapuskasing than before. We are certainly having some problems when it comes to the forest industry.

So my first question, I just want to say, before I get into the debates about the pros on this and some of the issues that we need to deal with, is, why would the member use his spot—and of course it's his choice, and I

guess I shouldn't call into question his judgment, but I am, in the sense that there's a whole bunch of other issues in the north that people are pretty upset about and that they want to see dealt with. Why doesn't the government member come to the House and raise one of those issues?

Where are we when it comes to the economy and what's happened as far as the loss of jobs in the Thunder Bay area? Where are we at?

Why not a bill on what's happening around natural resources when it comes to the exploitation of natural resources in the Ring of Fire? We already know, because at the cabinet table when I sat there in meetings, not as a member of cabinet but as a member of a coalition, when we sat with the Premier and said, "We want you to do something about the proposed closure" at that time "of the Xstrata refinery," people from the mining industry said, "There will be no processing of ores from the Ring of Fire in the province of Ontario. We're going to be a mining operation and we're going to ship the ore out to be processed somewhere outside of Ontario." Why not a bill making sure that the processing of that ore is done in Ontario so that the people of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, as the people from Timmins–James Bay and all points in between, are able to benefit from those natural resources that we have in northern Ontario?

So the first thing I want to put on the record is that although the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan is honourable in bringing forward this point, there's a whole bunch of issues that I think people in his constituency would rather see him speaking on.

So, winter tires? Yeah, great idea. Most of us use winter tires because we understand the benefit of them. But I just want to point out the following: It's not a bad idea to have some sort of a rebate or reduction on your insurance on the basis of using winter tires, but, as was pointed out earlier, some insurance companies already do that. I guess it doesn't hurt to try to put this in some form of legislation at one point, but to think that that is going to be the panacea that's going to get us safer winter driving I think is a bit of a leap.

The first thing is called driver responsibility. If you think you can go faster and you can take shortcuts when it comes to driver safety as a result of winter tires, you've got something else coming. The faster you go, the more danger there is that if you do have an accident and you lose control of your vehicle, you are going to harm yourself or somebody else within whatever collision or accident happens out of that. So part of my argument is that you need to be careful on the winter tire issue in the sense that you don't start going faster than you should be because you think you're safer because you've got winter tires or you're using studded tires. Once you lose control of a vehicle, and if you're going faster because you think you can because you're using winter tires, in a funny kind of adverse way we might be making things worse. However, I do agree that winter tires are a safer option than summer tires as far as having control of your vehicle. I don't argue the opposite. The point I'm trying

to make is that a responsible driver should always have the car or the truck that he or she is driving under control, understanding that accidents happen quickly and you don't want to be in a position of thinking you can go faster because you're using winter tires.

The other issue is that of winter road maintenance. One of the things that I note, and I think most other people note as they drive our highways across northern Ontario, is that our roads are not maintained to the same degree that they used to be. It was very common, I would say, about 10 or 15 years ago that if you got on the highway in northern Ontario and you were driving Highway 11 or Highway 17 or other major highways across the north, you were expecting to see bare pavement. You didn't expect to see centre-bare highway and hard snow cover on those particular highways. That is now becoming more and more the norm. Why? Because we're doing a lesser job, I think, over the longer run, of winter road maintenance. It started under the Conservatives with Mike Harris when he decided that he was going to privatize the system. We had a system at MTO where half of the work being done to maintain our highways was done by the private sector. The other half of the stock used to maintain our highways was done by MTO, but we were working to a certain standard. There was sort of a competition of standards between the private and the public sectors. The Mike Harris government decided that they knew best, so they decided to privatize winter road maintenance. We went to a system where the government said, "We're going to privatize winter road maintenance, and we're going to save money doing so." Well, not only did we not save money, we actually ended up spending more money. It turns out it's more expensive because now there is no competition. We've actually given winter road maintenance to very few contractors, and those contractors are now holding the government for ransom when it comes to the cost of us renewing our contracts with them.

Now what's worse is that the Dalton McGuinty government has taken the Mike Harris policy and put it in fifth gear. Now they're moving to privatize the rest of it. For example, where I come from, in and around the Timmins area, we were still utilizing a mix of responsible contractors in the private sector with the Ministry of Transportation employees and plows, and we had a good patrol system. The ministry was the one that was in charge of saying, "I need a plow here now. I need salt laid at this particular area" etc., so that we had a way of ensuring that our highways were maintained safely. We are now seeing, under the McGuinty government, that we're going to privatize and give all that to IMOS. They're getting all of the contracts, and as of next year, there will no longer be any MTO plows. There will be no MTO patrols. There will be none of that done by MTO anymore by about this time next year. And not only that; we're going to get rid of the smaller contractors, which were the backbone of the system: the Villeneuve Constructors of this world and others who have contracts within the system who do a damn good job—because it's

a partnership with the public and private sectors. Instead, what we've now done is we've given it all to IMOS. My argument is, it's going to be rather unsafe.

I just end on this point and say that I will be supporting this motion because I think it is a step in the right direction, but it is not a panacea for safe driving. If we're really going to do something about making sure our roads are safe, it would certainly help to do a better job of maintaining those highways in the winter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I rise to support my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I think he is on to something here.

In government, we routinely take actions that are designed to incent behaviour, from seat belts to smoking cessation programs—by the way, a lot of insurance companies offer lower rates for people who don't smoke, if I can draw the parallel—to fire extinguishers, to baby seats. I have a fire hydrant right outside my house. I get a lower rate because it's just at the end of my driveway. So there are all kinds of things.

I think there's ample evidence out there that would indicate that having one's car equipped with good-quality snow tires is a real bonus, particularly in the winter weather we have around here.

A couple of years back, my wife and I were in Toronto for a Sunday event, and it started snowing rather badly. We were heading back to Hamilton and a car—I suspect it was not equipped with winter tires—went by a white car, slid and just caught the corner of my car, and we began to go into a spin. The white car proceeded to hit another car, and there was a 10-car pileup. With my Michelin snow tires, praise God, I was able to steer around it. When the policeman came to take the accident reports, I remember him saying to me, "You were not hurt, I suspect, because you had good-quality snow tires on your car. You were able to negotiate your way out of that."

There's all kinds of research and experience from other jurisdictions that proves beyond a doubt that using winter tires is, in fact, the single most effective action that citizens can take to reduce the chances they'll be involved in an accident. I suspect that's why groups that we've come to rely on so much, groups like the Ontario Safety League, the Ontario Hospital Association, the Canadian Automobile Association and even the Ontario Trucking Association, along with a number of retailers, have formed a coalition to in fact be supportive of the honourable member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

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We have heard, I'm sure, personal stories about winter driving and some of the sad results. That said, I believe sincerely that it's our job, as elected officials, to try to move ahead with anything that we can discernibly ascertain to be of a safety benefit to those who we are privileged and honoured to represent. Clearly, this is one of those instances.

I applaud the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and I will support this. It's my hope that we can send a

signal to the insurance industry that this is something that they ought to reflect on.

By the way, we've done that several times in this assembly as well, in terms of some of the actions that we've taken around things that we are hopeful will result in lower premiums, with some assurance from the insurance industry that they would in fact reciprocate to some of those changes.

This isn't a new principle that we're arguing here. Surely the thing that ought to supersede everything else is: Is this in the best interests of Ontarians? Will this better protect Ontarians? Will this enhance safety on the roads? I sincerely believe it will, so I intend to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just have a few minutes. I wanted to make a couple of points.

Number one, there seems to be an attempt across the floor—and I want to say, first of all, I'm also going to support this bill, so it's not a question of that. There seems to be an attempt to somehow paint the McGuinty government as on the side of the consumer over and against the big, bad insurance companies. Quite frankly, the absolute contrary is true of the McGuinty government.

This is a government that's overseeing severe cutbacks to the benefits for catastrophic injuries, which has totally decimated some individuals' lives, I have to tell you. I have physiotherapists coming to my office who argue against it, who are frightened by it and whose businesses are impeded by it.

The McGuinty government is a friend of the insurance companies. They get money from the insurance companies. We get it. This doesn't change that whatsoever.

A couple of points that aren't in the bill: Will the same definitions of winter tires they use in Quebec be also the definition of winter tires? The motion says nothing about what kind of winter tires, about specifications etc. That makes a big difference, it seems to me.

The question, too: Is the next step mandatory, to make this a mandatory law? At that point, there would be a whole different discussion. I can tell you that the Toronto Environmental Alliance has spoken out against this motion, actually, for obvious reasons, because you burn more gas with more friction, so you should only be using them if you need them. That's the point.

In downtown Toronto, where I live, there are people who have very little money, who need their cars desperately to get from point A to point B. To add on to their burden with extra costs, when we don't see a lot of snow in downtown Toronto very often, is a real problem.

With those caveats, which would indicate to me that it needs some committee time and it needs some further discussion, certainly, that's something to consider.

But again, my primary point was: The McGuinty government, a friend of consumers over and against insurance companies? I wish.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very pleased to join the debate to support my colleague who has brought forward this motion, which calls on the insurance industry to reduce insurance premiums for drivers who use winter tires.

While winter tires are more widely used in northern Ontario, I think they would be very beneficial also to drivers who would use them in southern Ontario. It would encourage more drivers to buy winter tires. This would make our roads safer, and it would reduce the number of accidents and the severity of these accidents in the winter.

According to the Ministry of Transportation, the months with the highest number of accidents in Ontario are November to February; that is, during the winter. I too would like to share a little personal story with you today about when I learned of the difference between all-season tires and winter tires.

I was born and raised in southern Italy for a good part of my younger years. There's not much snow there. Actually, in a span of 30 years, I only saw snow twice: once in the late 1960s and the next time was in 1978, and for less than three centimetres schools were closed for over three days and the whole town came to a standstill. Needless to say, when I moved to Canada, to Ontario, with my husband, we purchased our first car, our first vehicle, and we were told that it had all-season tires. We thought all-season tires will withstand all weather conditions. There are four seasons; all-season tires will do well. We were not aware of winter tires. I must say that I drove the first few winters with all-season tires, until one winter morning, an icy, snowy winter morning in Toronto, in York South–Weston on Bala Avenue, I was driving with my newborn in the car and I was cautious, as any young mother would be. I braked normally, but my car just slid right through a stop sign. There was a young mother who was walking her child to school. I managed to avoid her and I hit a parked car. I was extremely lucky; I didn't hurt anyone; I didn't get hurt. However, only when we took the car to be repaired did I learn that there was a difference and there were benefits to winter tires. I had just not been aware.

I am sure that if an insurance company, at the time, would have put the question, were offering lower premiums when renewing my insurance, I would have become aware of winter tires. Just like myself, there are many newcomers to Ontario who come from countries where the snow is never seen. At least, this would increase awareness. It would certainly benefit consumers. It would benefit, I think, also, road safety, and therefore, I want to say that I am in support of this motion. I will be supporting my colleague, the MPP from Thunder-Bay–Atikokan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I can't support this resolution. The reason is that the last time I looked, the insurance industry in Ontario is a private sector industry. It is an industry that sets its own rates with guidelines and regu-

lations, of course. Those rates are set on the basis of actuarial principles, based on a company's rate experience, based on its investment returns, and they're set in a competitive environment, within a competitive framework.

What this bill does—not surprisingly, coming from the McGuinty government—is once again reach into a private sector business and tell the industry how it should do business. Well, I and my colleagues will make very clear that there is a difference between the McGuinty government and its way of looking at issues, and the Progressive Conservative way of approaching these issues.

There are already companies that provide discounts for customers, for those insured who take it upon themselves to put snow tires on their cars. I think one of the best commercials on the airwaves today is the great Canadian police chase, where we have the vision of the crooks stuck in the snow, and one of them gets out and he's pushing, pushing the car and then behind, there's the police car who's doing the same. Well, if the police car had snow tires, they would have caught the crooks; and if the crooks had snow tires, well, then they'd have a real chase.

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Look, in today's Ontario, this government wants to do everything for everybody, and look where it got us. It got us into the largest deficit that this province has ever seen. Businesses are leaving this province and making choices to invest elsewhere, where there still is some semblance of a free market system. When will this government stop? It all sounds so good.

Mr. Mauro has all kinds of other options he could have taken, as my colleague from northern Ontario said, to fill the space of his private member's ballot.

I'd like to read from a Facebook posting on his private member's bill. This comes from people up in Thunder Bay. The first one is posted by Jim. He says, "You're kidding me right! I do believe that Mr. Mauro is losing his grip on the road of important subject matters to address." I'm sure you've read this.

The next one, from Marak: "So the McDad party would save me what? 75 cents on my insurance premium after I spend \$800 on winter tires?" The honourable member said himself that he just put his winter tires on and it cost him \$1,000. What is he going to encourage here?

Look, I have had winter tires on my car ever since I drove. My father wouldn't let me drive in the winter without winter tires. I don't let my children drive without winter tires. I don't let my wife drive without having winter tires. Surely everyone in this province has been told the advantages of having winter tires. Let the consumer make the difference. Let them make the choice.

Mr. Mauro, with all due respect, I appreciate the intention. So do we all. But don't be reaching into business where government has no place. Allow the insurance companies to provide those discounts—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: What about car seats?

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, car seats are a bit of a different situation, my friend. I tell you again, the fact that this

government will stop at nothing to continue to encroach on the private sector—at one point, they're going to realize that with all of their good intentions, they're going to make it impossible for people to afford even the very basics in this province.

I think I've made it clear that I'm going to vote against this. It's very clear that the Liberals will pass this, because they have control of everything in this place, at least for the next 10 months. We'll see where this takes us. I would venture to say, even though it does pass, like all of the other private members' business that's passed in this House, it'll go nowhere. So we will once again have wasted yet another hour in this place: a lot of rhetoric, and this government will do nothing to actually implement this bill. I am going to predict that, and I'll take bets on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank all of those who spoke on the motion. It's not a bill, for the member from Newmarket—Aurora; it's a motion. Even the member from Wellington—Halton Hills and the member from Newmarket—Aurora—I thank them as well.

Let's be clear: This is not the McGuinty government saying or doing anything; this is me, as a private member, okay? The members opposite know that. This is private members' business. We're not telling the insurance industry what to do; we're telling the people in the province of Ontario who buy insurance to tell the insurance industry what to do.

I wish that, perhaps if there was more time, the member from Wellington—Halton Hills would be able to explain to us how this was going to reduce competition in the insurance industry, which is what he said. We are not regulating anything here, so this argument was really quite something to listen to.

The member from Timmins—James Bay has stepped out. He spent a little bit of time talking about the economy in Thunder Bay. I would be more than happy to stand here with him any time, anywhere, and discuss the economy in Thunder Bay relative to a whole whack of other municipalities in the province of Ontario and compare how Thunder Bay is doing to just about any other community in this province; any time, anywhere. If he wants to stand up and talk about the economy in Thunder Bay, I'm more than happy to do it. I'll talk about the hundreds of jobs that we've helped to create at Bombardier. I'll talk about the growth of the knowledge-based sector in Thunder Bay, at Thunder Bay Regional Hospital and at Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute, and I'll remind him that for a very long time in Thunder Bay, we've had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the province.

Yes, there are problems with the forestry industry. There still are everywhere that was ever a major industry player in the forestry sector.

At the end of the day, this is simple. I thought perhaps it was something that might not lend itself to partisan

debate. I guess I'm still, once again, surprised by some of the comments that were made. Nevertheless, that's fine. This is a simple motion, bringing attention to the fact that for a lot of people, it is cost-prohibitive to buy winter tires. We're looking at them to tell their insurance companies to cut them some slack. Let them make it a little bit more affordable to get some winter tires and save lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Mauro's resolution in about 50 minutes.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should continue to support future growth and expansions of Ajax-Pickering hospital to keep pace with the health care needs of the Ajax, Pickering and Durham region communities which will experience population increases and demographic changes towards an aging population.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Dickson moves private member's notice of motion number 58. Pursuant to standing order number 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm glad to rise in the House today to speak to my private member's resolution.

I want to start off by mentioning an important point made by our dedicated Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Deborah Matthews. Earlier in this legislative session, the minister mentioned, and I'm paraphrasing, "Your MPP is the best lobbyist," in reference to publicly funded institutions such as our hospitals. That's why I'm rising today: I'm standing up to speak in support of our Ajax-Pickering hospital.

I want to highlight the importance of our local hospital to the Legislature. In my 12 minutes, I will talk about (a) what our government has done locally for our Ajax-Pickering hospital, (b) where we are now in terms of my community's largest hospital expansion ever in our history and (c) plans for future growth in Durham region and meeting the health care needs of our growing population.

I would like to take a moment and just give you a brief history on a couple of things about the hospital.

It was originally commenced in the days of DIL, which is short for Defence Industries Ltd., and that was a block of land in the centre of Pickering township, which they eventually called Ajax. It was located where the Salvation Army citadel is now, directly across the road from where the Ajax municipal office is. It employed 20,000 people in the war effort. DIL in Ajax was the largest ammunition-filling centre in the entire British Commonwealth, with some 20,000 people going there by train, by truck, by any mode of transportation, in the Second World War.

The hospital was actually moved as an old wartime building and relocated in 1953. In 1954, it was officially

opened by Premier Leslie Frost, and it was quite an eventful occasion in Ajax. Of course, I'm young enough that I would barely remember that.

I do mention some of the first doctors who were on the board of directors, the board of medical staff, and they included popular names like Grant, Vipond and Cuddy. There was a Dr. Lindsey and a Dr. J.O. Ruddy. Ironically, they were both from Whitby. In those days, they were our doctors, because there were no doctors stationed in Ajax.

Quite a number of doctors were in that original gathering. Some of them are still with us and very active in Ajax, and that includes Dr. Bosch; Dr. Gove, who's now retired—his daughter is an active physician in our municipality; and, of course, Dr. McIlvene, who I bumped into within the last year.

In Ajax, like any other community, the hospital would not have been possible to survive without the works of the auxiliary. In that particular era, it was basically a ladies' auxiliary. They did everything from raising money—they actually bought a bus to transport people around, because in those days, on gravel roads and ditches and wood boardwalks, there was no such thing as community transportation. It goes on, right up until we actually had our first hospital in 1954.

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That kind of brings us closer to today. I have to tell you that today, in 2010, with the Rouge Valley Health team, which represents two hospitals only, Ajax-Pickering and Centenary, there are a total of 224 general practitioners, 325 specialists, 1,000 nurses and many other professionals who help make Ajax-Pickering hospital what it is: a top-notch, first-rate facility with some of the most knowledgeable staff and most skilled, caring medical professionals in the province of Ontario. In any community, having first-class health care services close to home is essential. In Ajax-Pickering, we are absolutely no different in that. Ajax-Pickering hospital is operated by the Rouge Valley Health System, and it tops the list of high priorities in our communities of both Ajax and Pickering.

Since I was elected in 2007, we have been fortunate enough that our hospital has been under considerable expansion. To say "considerable" may be an understatement. More accurately, our \$100-million hospital expansion is the largest institutional project the town of Ajax or the city of Pickering has ever seen in their collective histories. With this expansion nearing its completion, the provincial Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has provided 90% of that \$100 million. Our dedicated community has raised the other \$10 million.

I want to make it clear that I'm not rising in the House today in fear that our hospital's great progress may slow down or is in any jeopardy whatsoever. In fact, I'm here to support the future growth of our hospital, to tell our Ministry of Health how happy we are with their year-after-year funding increases and to tell the ministry to keep health care money flowing to our rapidly growing Durham region, and particularly to Ajax and Pickering. I

know what I would say on behalf of my colleague the former mayor of Pickering: That would include the other part of Pickering and of course up into east Scarborough.

I know that with previous governments you would have had good reason to fear a hospital closing, because it happened during cutting and slashing of the previous government. In fact, that government worked on closing 28 hospitals, eliminating 7,110 hospital beds and firing 6,200 nurses.

But today our provincial health care system is certainly in better hands. Since 2003, our government has come a long way, investing nearly \$1.5 billion to reduce surgical wait times across the province, ensuring that one million more Ontarians have a family doctor, hiring 2,900 more doctors, planning the opening of 18 new hospitals—some of those opening imminently—and creating over 10,000 new nursing positions since 2003. These are just a few of the health care accomplishments of the government across the board here in Ontario.

Locally, our Ajax-Pickering hospital has felt the benefits of our government's commitment to health care. I will provide some examples of how our government has already stood up for Ajax-Pickering hospital. I briefly mentioned the base funding increases to our hospital. To put a dollar figure on it, the Rouge Valley Health System, which operates our hospital, has received increases of almost \$50 million in funding over the past four fiscal years. This includes \$14.2 million for new and expanded programs and an additional \$21 million in funding to reduce wait times. You'll see that wait times have come down every year at Ajax-Pickering hospital.

With the help of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, our Central East LHIN and Rouge Valley Health staff, our hospitals have made tremendous achievements that we are proud to share with you. To start, the \$100-million expansion has allowed our hospital to renovate the 70,000-square-foot emergency department and also expand it by an additional 70,000 square feet. The new complex continuing care unit lab and diagnostic imaging includes X-rays, ultrasound equipment and more. The ministry has provided close to \$1 million—namely, \$877,900—for a new complex continuing care unit that opened in March of this year. Also this year our ministry has added two neonatal intensive care beds for a total of six. The NICU now has an operating fund of some \$738,000 annually.

All of this has been done to meet the current rapidly growing population of the communities of Ajax, Pickering, and going into Whitby and other parts of Durham region. With the ER expansion now complete, our hospital can further work on reducing wait times, treating more ER patients and preparing for future growth in Durham region. While the hospital's emergency department currently treats about 45,000 clients per year, our expanded and renovated space is built to accommodate 60,000. The addition of \$2.6 million in operating costs was available immediately, so that full funding was there, and our government has now provided additional operating funding for expanded facilities for

next year as well. I will work with Rouge Valley and Pickering and the Central East LHIN and the ministry to secure ongoing and hopefully continuing increased funding for years to come.

Our region of Durham is growing in population, particularly in my hometowns of Ajax and Pickering. Hospital leaders have told me they appreciate the support of this government in investing in the current and future needs of the communities served by Rouge Valley Ajax-Pickering.

I can also tell you that Rouge Valley is already looking ahead and assessing future needs of our Ajax and Pickering hospital. I mentioned the community support for an MRI machine, which would be an Ajax-Pickering hospital first. It undoubtedly would take the MRI wait times down in our region. It is chaired by Ms. Lucy Stocco, a long-time volunteer.

Rouge Valley has also identified future needs for an increase in medical/surgical beds at the Ajax-Pickering hospital. They estimate needing an additional 30 to 50 beds to keep up with population increases.

Much further into the future, based on Ajax-Pickering population growth, Rouge Valley is looking at developing plans to establish an ambulatory systemic cancer treatment clinic.

Rouge Valley Health is currently working collaboratively with the central east regional cancer program, the Central East Local Health Integration Network and Cancer Care Ontario to establish ambulatory cancer services, including the provision of systemic treatment and, potentially, radiation treatment capacity.

So these are some of the good things that are happening in Ajax-Pickering in reference to health care. We have an expanded and renovated emergency department, new facilities, new improvements to the entire hospital, thanks to the Ontario government. We are seeing improvements in services, and we are also seeing more nurses, and that's assisting us in lowering wait times. The results are there, and we are making more progress every day.

In closing, I will commit to continue to stand up for Ajax-Pickering hospital for the years to come, and our community will help us raise money for the MRI imaging unit, which is the Image is Everything campaign.

I look forward to hearing from other members on all sides of this good House today.

I thank you for the time allocation, Mr. Speaker, and those 19 seconds will make up for my last overrun.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak to the private member's resolution that's being brought forward by the member for Ajax-Pickering. Of course, in the resolution, he asks that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should continue to support future growth and expansions of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, and keep pace with the health care needs of the Ajax, Pickering and Durham region

communities, which will experience population increases and demographic changes toward an aging population.

I have no doubt that the member brings forward this resolution in good faith, and I have no doubt that the speech that he just gave is a sincere indication of the view of his community as he sees it.

I would say that it's my intention to support this resolution, and I would hope that all members of the House will do so as well. I would particularly encourage the government members to consider supporting this resolution. I would hope that they won't vote this one down. It would be very embarrassing for their colleague from Ajax-Pickering if indeed they did vote it down.

Five weeks ago, I brought forward a similar resolution calling attention to the needs of hospitals in Wellington-Halton Hills, whereby I called for support for the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Centre Wellington to move forward with its plan for a new hospital, to move forward to the next stage of planning, asking for a planning grant, as well as calling attention to the needs of the Georgetown hospital, which is asking for a small capital grant in order to proceed with its needed emergency room addition and diagnostic imaging renovation project.

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Even though I brought forward that resolution in good faith and tried to be completely non-partisan, talking to members in advance, including the Minister of Health, talking to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, trying to lobby members on the day of the vote, trying to get them to see fit to support my motion on a voice vote, unfortunately, they voted it down. They defeated that motion. So to see it coming forward again from a government member five weeks later, the word "hypocrisy" comes to mind, but I know that's a word that I'm not permitted to say, so I'll rephrase that and indicate that I would suggest this is a very ironic situation that we face just five weeks later.

The member for Ajax-Pickering started off his speech, interestingly, by quoting the Minister of Health, who, the very day that my resolution was debated in the House, was quoted in the Toronto Star as saying that, in fact, "Our MPPs are more than willing to act as lobbyists. I urge the hospitals to make use of the best lobbyists they have and that's their MPPs." That's how I started my speech five weeks ago, and that's how the member for Ajax-Pickering started his speech as well.

It's interesting to note that after my resolution was defeated—and of course I was quite disappointed; I had brought down a whole bunch of representatives from our hospitals, and they were disappointed too—the very next day, the Liberal attack machine engaged and started to attack me personally, as well as my community. In fact, Kevin Flynn's office, the member for—what riding does Kevin represent?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Oakville.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Oakville. His office actually sent out a press release the very next day into my riding to my local media attacking me for bringing forward this resolution and suggesting, in fact, that it was

my fault that the resolution was defeated; even though the government has the majority—they control everything around here—and even though I did my best to bring forward the resolution and tried my best to get it passed, somehow it was my fault that it was defeated, which I thought was rather strange. They even indicated that if my motion had passed, hospitals in adjacent communities somehow would have been negatively impacted. That came out of Kevin Flynn's office.

Then the local riding association president for the Liberals decided to attack me too, and he's been writing letters to the editor, interestingly, again attacking me, suggesting that somehow it was my fault that the resolution was not passed. In fact, the letters are so replete with inaccuracies and untrue statements, I don't even know where to start.

So it's interesting that the Liberals now would bring this forward this afternoon. Again, I would hope that Thursday afternoons, during private members' business, we could tone down the partisanship a little bit and we could try to look at the merits of the proposals that are being brought forward.

I would continue to encourage the Minister of Health to look at the proposals that are being brought forward in my riding, in Wellington-Halton Hills, the Groves project as well as the Georgetown project. I had a chance to speak to her at estimates committee a few days ago, on November 16, and I engaged her again, in a non-partisan way, to try to look at our proposals. In conclusion, I asked her if she would be willing to visit our hospitals, to tour them sometime, and if she wasn't able to do that, at the very least, would she be prepared to meet with our hospital officials personally before Christmas? I made that request in a public forum. I have not yet heard a response from her, and it's been just over a week, maybe 10 days, since that request was made.

I would ask the Minister of Health once again if she would be prepared to meet with the hospital officials from the Groves Memorial Community Hospital as well as the Georgetown hospital. I would want to participate in the meeting in a non-partisan fashion as well. I would hope that we could meet before Christmas to work on these projects.

Once again, I would say to the member for Ajax-Pickering, and perhaps other members who may have hospital proposals in their ridings: Bring them forward, bring them up. We know that there's a huge list of backlogged projects. There is a backlog in terms of the capital decision-making at the Ministry of Health. Many of us have hospital projects, but I think they are amongst the most important infrastructure investments that could be made in our ridings, and I would encourage all members of the House to look at it in that perspective and look at this in a non-partisan way.

I would also call upon the Minister of Health to release the list of capital projects that the ministry has so that communities know where they are on the list and can plan prudently and responsibly. That's really important too.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for indulging me this afternoon. Again, I say to the member

for Ajax-Pickering, congratulations on your resolution. I look forward to voting for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I would say to the honourable member from Wellington-Halton Hills, while you didn't actually call the member a bad name, you came very close, so I would ask people to please select their language very carefully.

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to vote in favour of this, but I want to lay down a couple of markers, because I think it's important to say a few things through this debate.

First of all, to the motion Mr. Dickson puts forward: "That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should continue to support future growth and expansions of Ajax-Pickering hospital to keep pace with the health care needs of the Ajax, Pickering and Durham region communities which will experience population increases and demographic changes towards an aging population." And the aging population is where I want to get into this debate.

I'm not going to say for one second that there isn't a place for institutions when it comes to dealing with both acute care and long-term care within the province of Ontario, because, clearly, hospitals and long-term-care facilities play an important role. But I really want to put on the record, as a New Democrat, that, yes, we need to make sure that we support those, but we need to really make sure that we also look at alternatives when it comes to making sure that we provide the type of care that we need within the community, and I want to speak to some of those just very quickly.

First of all, I'm going to spend pretty well all of my time talking about the aging population, because I think that's going to be the issue that's going to sort of come up and grab us at some point. We all know the demographics. The baby boomers, all of us, are now in our mid-50s and into our 60s. Not too long from now, we're going to be needing the health care system—some of us already, far more than we would like to—and there's going to be a large clump of people in the population who are going to age together in large numbers and who are going to be needing a whole bunch of services that we're ill-prepared to deal with, both in the institutional sense and the community sense.

I guess the question that we have to ask ourselves as legislators is, should we be putting all our eggs into one basket? Now, I'm not pretending that Mr. Dickson is saying that we should do so. I know that he believes, as I do, that we need to invest in community care, but I want to speak to that, because I think that is one of the things that we're probably not doing as well as we need to.

Yes, I believe there needs to be some expansion on the long-term-care side. In fact, I was at a groundbreaking not much more than three weeks ago in Timmins, where Extendicare received the expansion of 61 long-term-care beds in the city of Timmins. Myself, the current mayor, the former mayor, Dr. Smith and others were the ones that were pushing for an expansion of our long-term-care system, because we recognized six, seven years ago, as

we started this process, that there was a crisis in long-term care in our community and in northeastern Ontario generally. What we didn't have was a capacity to deal with the amount of people who needed to get into long-term-care institutions.

But what we presented to George Smitherman, the minister of the day, was an approach that didn't just concentrate on the expansion of the long-term-care facility. We said, "There are a number of things that need to be done." We need to make sure that we provide adequate funding within the long-term-care system in the community so that family members are able to get the services that they need in their homes in order to assist a mother or father who needs assistance to live at home independently. We need to make sure that we have the money to do things such as making sure proper meals are prepared so that the person is able to eat adequately and is able to eat in a healthy way. We need to make sure that we have supports when it comes to the person's medical needs within the home, if there needs to be a nurse who comes in or whatever. We need to make sure that we have somebody who can take care of some of the daily needs, such as bathing, cleaning, ironing, washing the dishes, doing all those things, because it is much cheaper to do that in a home than it is to do it in a long-term-care institution, to a degree. We need to invest in that.

We then said, "We need to look at transitional housing," as we call it, so that you have a facility such as the one we funded back in the time when we were in government, in 1990 to 1995, in Iroquois Falls, where there's a long-term-care facility called the South Centennial Manor. What we did was we built a not-for-profit apartment building right next to and connected to the long-term-care facility. The idea was, as you became a little bit older and as you became a little bit more needy when it came to services and you were not terribly comfortable living alone but needed certain supports to leave you with some independence, you may leave from your home or even leave from an apartment building somewhere else in the community, go to this particular facility and you would get the services you need dispatched through the community care access centres within the apartment building. But if you needed additional help, we can dispatch help from the long-term-care facility into the apartment building so that those people are able to live independently.

That was done, I think, for a number of reasons. It was not just a question of it being a cheaper way of providing care, but it's certainly a much more humane way of dealing with people's needs as they become more fragile, either because of disease, because of injury or because of age. That was one of the approaches we took.

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We also said back then, when we made our proposals to Minister Smitherman, that we needed to have initiatives and programs that allowed us to wrap services around the hospital, so that it wasn't just a question of having the institutions respond but a way of getting the community to respond to the needs of the institution, being, in this case, the Timmins and District Hospital,

because we had a large number of alternate-level-of-care patients who were filling our hospital, and we had less acute-care beds because more of our beds became ALC beds as a result of not having the capacity in neither the community nor the long-term-care facilities to care for them. We said, "You need to make sure that we have an ability for the institution, in this case, Timmins and District Hospital, to work with the community so that we can properly identify very simple things, like the person who shows up at the doctor's office and says, 'I'm not feeling well,' and we're able to catch whatever is going on in that episode in that person's life early enough so that we can treat it and deal with it before it becomes an emergency, or before it comes to a situation where the person can no longer live independently."

We found early intervention on the part of the medical community, doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses and people in the emergency wards. If we wrapped those services around some sort of a common methodology when it came to identifying what the person needed and providing those services so that the person didn't fail and go into crisis, we could prevent people from failing, as far as their health failing and going into crisis and then needing an ALC bed or a long-term-care bed.

In the community of Timmins we looked at a number of different approaches as to how we support people in the community: (1) by identifying early what their symptoms are so that we can properly deal with them so that they do not fall into crisis, and I'm talking about a health crisis; and (2) if they need services, that we're able to provide those services in the community in a multitude of ways, either independently in the home or within the context of an apartment building—as we call it, "a transitional housing unit"—that would allow people who are not able to live at home independently, but are still well enough to not have to go into a long-term-care facility or an ALC unit, to live within those apartments. We looked at a multitude of interdisciplinary approaches to deal with that.

I just want to put on the record that I will support Mr. Dickson's motion because I understand where he's going with this, because all of us are trying to ensure that we have the proper health facilities and health services for the communities we represent. I'm sure the member, when he gets a chance to speak in response, will say, "Of course I'm looking at those things, and I'm actively involved."

I wanted to put those on the record because I think it's important we recognize that at every opportunity when we get the chance to talk about health care, not just from the perspective of the institutions but to take a look at health care from the perspective of the community.

I just want to end on this point. I spoke to it to a degree, and that is the issue of to what degree the medical community can play a great role in averting having people put into long-term-care facilities at an earlier time of their lives. We really need to do a much, much better job in this province, I think, on the part of doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, emergency wards, health clinics, family health teams, all of us who are the point of entry

to the health care system having almost a checklist of things you've got to check for when the person comes in so you can identify where the person is at in their disease or the health episode they happen to be in; so that we can properly assess where the person is at, what can be done at the early stages in order to provide as much quality of life as we can by treating the person quickly and efficiently and making sure they get the type of medical care they need to stop their condition from advancing; so that people are better able to manage their diseases so they're able to live with some quality of life and, hopefully, live in an independent setting within the community.

I think that's something we need to do a much better job of, so I think there needs to be better coordination of the methodologies medical communities use when someone is being assessed as they walk into the clinic or doctor's office for the first time.

Again, just on the last point—and I end on this—we really need to have a way of being able to support people at home. For example, one of the things that many people in our community have asked me—and I'm sure have asked other members—is why there isn't some sort of program that allows family caregivers to get a bit of a break on their taxes or, I don't know, some credit of some type so that if somebody chooses to stay at home to care for mom or dad because they can't live at home alone anymore and are prepared to have that family member move into their home and stay there to take care of them, that we recognize that financially in some way. It would certainly be a much better option for that individual, because who wants to go into the long-term-care facility if they don't have to? The second point is that it can be a much more efficient way of providing services to the individual.

For example, let's say I decide that I want to care for my elderly mother if she was still alive and I'm prepared to do that at home, either myself, my wife or one of my children. There should be some compensation, possibly, to offset the money we have to spend to do that ourselves as a family, recognizing that that person doesn't have to be in a long-term-care institution and may not need certain services from the community, when it comes to services from the CCAC. I think it's another option we need to take a look at; not an easy one to tackle, I understand, because there's an issue of quality of care etc. that needs to be dealt with, but something that I think we need to take a look at, at one point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to be able to stand for just a few minutes to speak to the resolution of the member from Ajax-Pickering, as not only my colleague but also my mate in the context of our ridings abutting each other. My constituents use the Ajax-Pickering hospital as well as the Centenary hospital—the two sites—which are part of the Rouge Valley Health System.

I want to just ask the members as they're thinking about the member's resolution and some of the debate that has gone on and will go on today, to maybe think of the resolution in this context, that you read through and

say, "That in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should continue to support future growth and expansions of" your local hospital as opposed to Ajax-Pickering "to keep pace with the health care needs of" your community, which will experience population growth or some other changes, but more likely demographic changes toward an aging population. I'd ask you to think in that context from the standpoint of considering supporting the resolution, because the resolution speaks to the need for us to ask the ministry and the government to continue to support, as a priority, health care through hospitals in this province.

What the member didn't ask for in his resolution was funding or support for a specific project. He speaks to the members, as the Minister of Health said and as was raised during debate today, about members being the best lobbyists on community. I hope he'll take the opportunity to lobby the minister for specific project needs as he sees them within that site and within the hospital system, and I would encourage other members to do the same. But in the context of this place, I think it's appropriate that we speak to the need for the ministry to continue supporting and investing in health in our community by supporting our community hospitals. So I'm looking at it from that context.

I want to talk a bit about community and community support for our local hospitals, and how important that is in encouraging government to continue to make investments. I had a wonderful opportunity this past Saturday evening to attend the sixth annual Mayor's Gala by Mayor Dave Ryan, recently re-elected and holding his sixth gala. It's a wonderful event. It is, in my personal view, the premier social event in Durham region at this point in time, with representation from across the region. The funds raised from that go to a number of causes. The hospital has been the principal one for that purpose. Not only that, but this year his gala also supported Alzheimer Ontario through Alzheimer Durham, as well as the Grandview Children's Centre.

Communities need to have very substantive involvement. When you get the kind of political leadership coming out of the mayor's office supporting your hospital, that's an important thing.

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For a number of years, the communities of Pickering and Ajax, through the joint mayors' annual golf tournament, the Mayors' Charity Classic, have raised probably \$1.2 million or \$1.3 million over its—almost 15 years now, I guess, since the golf tournament was started. That's, again, the community coming together to raise money for their local hospital. When communities do that, it certainly makes it easier for government to do its part as well.

It's important for both government and community to be partners in their community hospitals. As we think this afternoon about whether or not we will be supporting the member from Ajax-Pickering in his motion, again I want to finish where I started and ask you to think of it in this context: If you replace the words "Ajax-Pickering hospital" with the name of your own community hospital,

is it something you'd want the ministry to do; to continue—and government to continue—to see health as the number one priority of the needs of the people of Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Whitby-Ajax.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am rising today to speak in favour of the resolution that has been brought forward by the member from Ajax-Pickering. Although I find it a little bit strange and a little bit ironic that essentially the same resolution was brought forward by my colleague the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and was not supported, I understand the principle behind it and we are prepared to support it.

As it happens, I am particularly well-acquainted with the issues being faced by the Rouge Valley Ajax-Pickering hospital, since it was part of my riding when I first was elected to the Legislature in the by-election in 2006 as the member from Whitby-Ajax. I have enjoyed working with the wonderful people in the community of Ajax, who are ardent supporters of their hospital, and I continue to be involved in health issues that relate to all of the members and residents of Durham region. Most recently, I was active—and the member from Ajax-Pickering will know that there were a number of community members, about a year or so ago, who were really opposed to the transfer of the in-patient mental health beds from the Rouge Valley Ajax-Pickering hospital site to the Scarborough Centenary site. Notwithstanding their concerns, which were expressed quite vocally at a number of meetings, the in-patient mental health beds were transferred, and so these 20 beds were lost to the Scarborough site with the assistance of the government and with the assistance of the LHIN.

In June 2006, as the member for Whitby-Ajax, I put forward my very first private member's resolution, which sought to achieve essentially the same basic goal as the resolution that's being brought forward today: that is, to secure the appropriate growth-based health care funding for Durham region, which as a whole is a very fast-growing community. I would just like to go back and revisit the text of the resolution that I brought forward then, which was—and I quote myself, I guess—"That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately increase health care funding in Durham region to the provincial average, and, thereafter, develop and implement health care funding in Durham region based upon population growth."

The members of the government didn't support my resolution then, but I guess that was then and this is now. It is in the best interests of the community, so I think that we all need to rise to the occasion and support this.

I would just like to comment on a couple of statistics that I think illustrate the needs of Durham region as a whole. The Growing Communities Healthcare Alliance noted in its 2007 report that the "GTA/905 area lagged behind the rest of the province." It also noted, "The annual operating funding gaps for both health and social services ... continue to widen" in Durham region as compared to the rest of Ontario.

A recent report by the Durham planning department estimated that the population of the region of Durham was 531,000 people in 2001. A target of 760,000 people has been estimated as being the number of people who will be living in the region by 2011, and a target of 970,000 more people by 2021, which will be more than double the 1991 population.

Considering all of this, I think it is appropriate to take a moment to thank the health care professionals in Durham region for the incredible diligence and devotion they've shown in the face of increasingly difficult working conditions, as they have a higher and higher caseload, be they nurses in the hospital or people working in social service agencies that are devoted to the community. They have been able to manage with very few resources, and we do commend them for the excellent work that they've done, but of course, this isn't going to be sustainable over time as our population growth continues apace.

We've seen signs of strain in our communities, and I think that all of the members from Durham region would agree that there are considerable concerns with respect to a couple of issues. I'd just like to raise two in particular. One is with respect to long-term care. There are many families in Durham region that are having a very hard time finding a long-term care-placement for their loved one because of the growth of the population—the more frail and elderly seniors in particular that we have in our communities.

We also have a significant problem with home care. Though I believe the aging-at-home strategy, as a strategy, is very commendable, the fact is that we really haven't seen the funding that we need in order to provide optimal care for the people who need the home care services in all of our communities.

It's interesting because I actually had someone from the member from Ajax-Pickering's riding contact my office yesterday about an issue where she was recently advised that her father is unfortunately terminally ill and is being sent home for palliative care, and is being transferred from Sunnybrook Hospital. While they were there, they were told that they would receive eight hours of care from the CCAC and that all of the equipment that her father would require—hospital beds and so on—would be paid for. The next day, she got a call from the people doing the discharge planning, who told her that, no, those eight hours of service are only available in Toronto, but Durham region only allows for two hours of care and no hospital rentals—no equipment rentals.

Clearly, I see that I'm running out of time here. I would just like to say that there is a lot more that remains to be done, but we need to work collaboratively in Durham region to support both the Rouge Valley system and the Lakeridge Health system. I hope that they will get the same increase in operational funding to deal with the issues they have to deal with. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Levac): I would like to also make an apology to the member. I identified your riding as Whitby-Ajax. It's actually Whitby-Oshawa with the change, so my apologies.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to thank everybody for the opportunity to speak to the resolution from my colleague from Ajax-Pickering, who is always a strong champion, not only for Ajax and Pickering, but also for Durham. As you know, he has deep roots there and is totally involved in the community in every aspect of anything that is going there—charitable events; he's just a non-stop, tireless champion of that part of our province that is sometimes forgotten, as you know; it's not as well-known as Brantford perhaps, sometimes, but it does have incredible attractions.

I know they have one of the most underrated waterfront linear parks that's great for children and families. It's got an incredible history going back to the war, as the member has said. They are certainly very attractive, and that's why they're growing in leaps and bounds with the affordable housing that's still there. You're near the Duffins Creek, which is a beautiful watershed area, never mind Lake Ontario. It's a great place to raise a family and to live, and for our seniors.

I think what he's trying to do here today is trying to ensure that his hospital is given the attention and resources it needs. Those demands for the Ajax-Pickering hospital are demands that, I think, we see unabated right across this province, because it seems that no matter what happens in health care, there's need for more technology, more medical staff, more support staff, new facilities. Like I tell people, it's quite a difficult job being in charge of, as the Minister of Health is, I think over 400 hospitals, if I'm not mistaken, that are operating 24/7, around the clock, dealing with life-and-death situations—that we sometimes think are sort of out of the way, but they're front and centre in all of our hospitals.

This hospital certainly has had support but there are always more challenges in the future. I think the member is saying that hopefully this support will continue to meet the needs of this community. One of the aspects that he talks about is also the demographic changes that are happening right across Ontario, the aging boomer bubble that's coming. It's extremely challenging.

1550

I hope that this helps to bring some attention to this incredibly dynamic part of Ontario, which, as I said, is one of the best places to live probably anywhere in North America, if you consider the amenities and the quality of the people, the health care and the schools. I know they've got some of the best research colleges and universities right nearby. I think that it's only fitting that he's here.

The member from Timmins-James Bay was talking about medical technology and the new approaches to dealing with the aging population. I had something in my pocket; I wonder if I could show it to people. I have a pill cam here, Mr. Speaker; it's not really a prop. It's a pill that you swallow, and inside the pill is a camera. What happens is that a doctor, on his computer, as a result of you swallowing that pill cam, can see what treatment is required—if you have colitis or if you have some other form of intestinal issue. This is the type of incredibly

dynamic technological innovation that is taking place right here in Ontario and all over the world.

The challenge is that these new technologies which the Ajax-Pickering hospital needs are extremely expensive. That's why we need that partnership in developing new technologies, community support for our hospitals and, obviously, government support.

Today is an opportunity to remind people how important this part of Ontario is, how important the Durham region is to Ontario, and how important Ajax-Pickering is to this part of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, it is my pleasure to rise in support of the member from Ajax-Pickering's resolution, my seatmate. Also, my riding is neighbouring to that of Ajax-Pickering.

In Oak Ridges-Markham, we know all about population growth and also changing demographics. I remember when I first became the medical officer of health for York region in 1988. Our health department prepared a report; we called it York Needs Services! It was arguing strenuously that our funding was based on historical population, and that the growth in our area was simply not being recognized by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Gradually, over the last 22 years, we have been catching up. There is no question. There are many growth-based population funding models, and these are often adjusted for things like the aging of the population. But we need to ensure that every type of funding coming to the high-growth areas is, in fact, done in this way.

I was certainly very fortunate to attend at Southlake Regional Health Centre. I have three hospitals in York region that actually support constituents coming from Oak Ridges-Markham. Southlake Regional Health Centre just received some \$15 million in post-construction operating funding to actually support three new radiation bunkers at that hospital, which is now the regional cancer centre for York region. They are at capacity already. So the type of growth that we're seeing in the 905 is truly outstanding, and it's a real challenge to keep pace.

Just this week, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Deb Mathews, attended at York Central Hospital, which has for many years been requesting expansion to meet the growing needs of its population. Again, a \$12-million post-construction operating grant was given to them. They have wonderful new facilities in the emergency room, the intensive care unit, which has doubled in size.

The hospital that actually is in my riding, Markham Stouffville Hospital, is, at any moment, going to have a groundbreaking ceremony, literally doubling the capacity of that hospital. It had not expanded since it opened in 1989, and of course the population of Markham had just about doubled.

Finally, we are catching up. I would like to see this type of catch-up in all areas of the province and therefore am happy to support my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Ajax-Pickering has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to acknowledge and thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills; the member from Timmins-James Bay; the member from Pickering-Scarborough East; the member from Whitby-Oshawa—you're right, to the previous speaker, that riding was partially Ajax; the member from Eglinton-Lawrence; and the member from Oak Ridges-Markham. Each of you had something very positive to say.

The member from Wellington-Halton Hills, you're an excellent lobbyist for your area, and I know that by just mentioning hospitals, including Georgetown, you've commenced a process. The difference is, my needs are not immediate. I just wanted to, as the member from Timmins-James Bay said, get them on the record, and I know that you're doing the same thing. Hopefully you and I will have the same success.

The member from Timmins-James Bay referenced the aging population. It's certainly a future issue, and we're going to have to deal with it.

The member from Pickering-Scarborough East, I appreciate your comments mentioning a sensitive, well-meaning resolution to continue to support ongoing expansion.

The Whitby-Oshawa member mentioned the mental health unit and the scenario we had there, and I recall that very well. She mentioned a cancer care patient in a situation. If I can find out more about that, I'd be pleased to work with you to see if we can't do something immediately for that resident.

The member for Eglinton-Lawrence, some of your constituents reside around the corner from me in Ajax—a 40-year-old barber shop. There are six of them in there every day and they say, "We talk about Mikey." You always have kind words for Ajax, and I thank you.

For my seatmate, I thank her for the kind comments. She's really on the money when it comes to funding for high-growth areas; I agree with that.

Mr. Speaker, I do apologize for running over.

Like many other people, I have run into situations in emergency departments. I have, during my last two visits—one with the old ER, one with the new—gone from five hours to three and a half hours, so that's a very positive statement.

I thank the hospital, because a special occasion happened on Saturday—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business has expired. It's now time to vote.

VEHICLE SAFETY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll first deal with ballot item number 52, standing in the name of Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Jaczek has moved private members' notice of motion number 54.

Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Frank Klees: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Carried on division.

Motion agreed to.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 53.

Mr. Mauro has moved private members' notice of motion number 56.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Frank Klees: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Carried on division.

Motion agreed to.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We now deal with ballot item number 54.

Mr. Dickson has moved private members' notice of motion number 58.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having now been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NARCOTICS SAFETY AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA SENSIBILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 23, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise today, on behalf of the official opposition, to offer some comments with respect to the third reading of Bill 101, the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act, 2010.

Let me be clear at the outset: We support this bill. The problem in Ontario with prescription drug abuse is so serious that any attempt to tackle it has to be supported, because there is no question that Ontario is in the middle of a health crisis involving the prescribing, dispensing and illicit use of opioids, particularly those containing oxycodone. These drugs include OxyContin and Percocet.

When used properly, opioid medications offer significant relief for acute and chronic pain. When taken for recreational purposes, however, they produce a heroin-like euphoric effect and quickly become addictive. Therein lies the problem: When addicted, people will beg, borrow and steal to obtain these medications, and the results are quickly becoming evident as crime rates rise and the social fabric of communities unravels.

Numerous statistics have been cited by all parties during the debate on Bill 101, and I don't want to repeat what has already been stated. Suffice it to say that it will require the efforts of many, including health care providers, social service agencies, law enforcement officers and justice officers, as well as individual communities, in order to battle this crisis effectively.

As I said, I don't propose to review the statistics, because the case has been made. But what I would like to comment on during the time allotted to me for this third reading debate is what, in my view, Bill 101 deals with effectively, what it failed to deal with properly, and what still remains to be done.

First, I should note that the impetus for Bill 101 came from several sources. The College of Physicians and Surgeons facilitated a forum in May 2009 to identify the issues around opioid misuse and to suggest potential solutions. From a multidisciplinary group involving patients, physicians, pharmacists, dentists, nurses, government, addiction treatment specialists, law enforcement officers and many others came a commitment to work together to formulate concrete solutions. Four working groups were established to deal with opioid-related issues around education, access to health resources, technology, and prescription tracking and addressing diversion.

Months were spent studying these issues, and the result was the comprehensive report called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance: Tackling the Opioid Public Health Crisis*. This was issued by the College of Physicians and Surgeons several months ago.

The report contains a lot of useful information and a number of recommendations, and is arranged around five main themes, which are:

- (1) Significantly enhance the training and ongoing education of health care providers;
- (2) Improve education and awareness of the public, with a particular emphasis on high-risk communities;
- (3) Create a coordinated, accessible system for the treatment of pain and addiction that is based on the inter-

professional model of care and includes an expanded network of specialized and regulated pain clinics;

(4) Make greater use of technology to improve outcomes for patients and reduce diversion by taking immediate steps to make all opioid prescription information available to all prescribers and dispensers, and establishing a drug information system, including a drug monitoring system, that allows all prescribers and dispensers to access complete medication profiles; and

(5) Empower health care professionals, institutions and law enforcement agencies to reduce diversion by facilitating information-sharing and establishing a duty to report criminal activity.

The overriding goal of this report is to improve patient care and health outcomes by ensuring effective treatment for patients with chronic, non-cancer pain while also supporting solutions to help stem the diversion of opioids.

So I'm certainly supportive of this bill with respect to the work that has been done by the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

I'd also like to comment on the work that was done by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. There are several members here present today who were also members of the committee, and we did issue a report of 21 pages that contains 23 practical recommendations for how to deal with the mental health and addiction issues in the province. One of the issues that we recommended was recommendation 11, which indicated that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers. The report of the select committee was issued on August 26 this year, and the narcotics strategy, of which Bill 101 is a part, was announced the following day, on August 27.

It is commendable that the Minister of Health has chosen to advance at least one of the recommendations of the select committee, but it certainly is only a small part of it, because it only addresses the tracking, prescribing, dispensing and filling of prescription narcotics and doesn't set up any additional programs or fortify any existing narcotics and addictions programs to actually deal with the problem. So this bill only identifies the problem. The next big piece is to put the resources in and to put the strategies in place in order to actively deal with it.

I know that there are others who were involved in bringing Bill 101 forward. I know that the ministry relied upon the expert assistance of the narcotics advisory panel, and we're certainly very grateful for their advice and counsel—they are the experts in this area—and also the assistance that the ministry has received from key stakeholders, including the health profession regulatory colleges, First Nations communities, law enforcement officials, pharmaceutical manufacturers, third party payers, sadly, families who have lost children to narcotics overdoses, and individuals themselves suffering from addiction. They were all extremely helpful in bringing Bill 101 forward.

According to the ministry, the narcotics strategy will achieve several goals:

(1) Curb inappropriate access to prescription narcotics and other controlled substances by providing education and raising public awareness about the safe use of these drugs;

(2) Partner with the health care sector to support appropriate prescribing and dispensing practices through education;

(3) Improve monitoring of the prescribing and dispensing of narcotics and controlled substances through the development of a provincial narcotics database; and

(4) Look into options for treating and supporting those addicted to prescription narcotics and controlled substances.

So there we are. It's rather surprising that currently there isn't a way for a doctor or other prescribing health professional to find out if his or her patient has recently been prescribed a narcotic or other controlled substance. So we have this situation where individuals are going doctor shopping and going from place to place visiting different physicians and other health care providers to get prescriptions for narcotics that they are either using themselves or are, in turn, selling on the street for very high amounts, particularly in some of the more remote communities in the north.

I do commend the government for bringing Bill 101 forward, but it's not perfect. There are still a number of missed opportunities here, things that could have been addressed but which were not, that were raised by a number of stakeholders. I would like to express some of the those concerns because I think they are still things that we do need to deal with.

The first issue is the fact that, during second reading, the official opposition mentioned, as did members of the NDP, that we really needed to have some travel on this bill, particularly in the north, because some of the problems related to prescription drug overdose are very specific and particular to some of the northern communities, and so a solution that is developed in Toronto isn't necessarily going to be of any assistance. We did ask for full committee hearings, including hearings in northern Ontario and First Nations communities, in order to make sure we understood the full parameters of this bill and that all stakeholder were going to have the ability to comment on this bill, if they were so inclined.

1610

As has been noted, the problem with the abuse of prescription narcotics is particularly acute in many First Nations communities, particularly in the more remote locations, where an OxyContin tablet that may sell on the streets in Toronto for about \$45 will sell for several hundred dollars in those communities. There are many other social issues that are arising out of that, because if you are a person living on a fixed income, as many people are in First Nations communities—they are only receiving around \$1,000 a month, and one tablet costs several hundred dollars. You can do the math and figure out that that's not going to last very long. So it's leading to a lot of upheaval in families, and that, of course, has yet to be addressed.

There's also the logistical issue of travel for people in the north. It's not possible for most people to come to Toronto to address the committee, so we felt that it was particularly important that we be accessible to as many people as possible. During the meeting of subcommittee we all agreed that that was important. Travel time was allocated to several communities, including Timmins and Sandy Lake—I forget the other community, but there were three locations—and then on the first day of hearings we were advised that the first day would also be the last day and that any travel was going to be cancelled.

It's quite significant, and this was commented not just by us, not just by the members of the official opposition and the third party, but by some of the presenters who actually came to us in the committee. I would like to quote Ms. Maureen Cava, who is a member of the board of directors for the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. Maureen indicated, "I do think there are unique challenges in the north. There are many different challenges. One I'll highlight is ... access to service. When you think about living in a northern community, albeit small, with perhaps not the resources and physicians and/or other health care providers—nurses, individuals who can deal with mental health issues—there is a huge problem with access to services. That's one of them. There are many other issues, but that's the one I'll highlight because I know time is limited." And so it was.

In addition, Dr. Allan Gordon, who is a neurologist and director of the Wasser Pain Management Centre at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, agreed, recommending travel "outside of Toronto to accommodate regional issues. Northwestern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, southeastern Ontario, the nation's capital and even Toronto the Good are all crying out to tell you ... their stories..." So it's most unfortunate that we weren't able to hear all of those stories which I believe would have made this a much stronger bill than the form in which it actually is emerging.

Another problem that we noted with respect to the legislation relates to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. One of the first things that I was concerned about, as I know other members were when we first heard of Bill 101, was the privacy concerns related to this bill and the sharing of information between prescribers and dispensers. In our first briefing, we were reassured that it was not a problem, that this had been cleared with the Information and Privacy Commissioner in advance; no problems with it.

Unfortunately, and to our surprise, we found out at committee in the form of a written submission that came from the Information and Privacy Commissioner that she did, in fact, have significant concerns with this legislation. She commented on it at length. Because I've got some very small print here, I'm going to put my glasses on and read from the letter what the Information and Privacy Commissioner said. She said:

"It is further to these responsibilities and this statutory mandate that I am making these written submissions to the Standing Committee on Social Policy with respect to

the proposed act. In particular, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario has the following fundamental concerns with the proposed act:

"(1) The lack of clarity as to how the collection, use and disclosure of personal information will achieve the stated purpose of the proposed act.

"(2) Given the availability of less privacy-intrusive measures, the proposed act does not appear to be a necessary and proportionate means of achieving the stated purposes.

"(3) The unjustified intrusion on the privacy of individuals resulting from the directed disclosure of sensitive personal information to the government."

None of these concerns were resolved, despite the requests for amendments that we submitted based upon the material that was contained in the letter from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. So we do have outstanding significant concerns around privacy and access to information that I believe will need to be addressed.

Another concern we have is with respect to the role of the colleges. It appears as though the legislation is not going to allow direct communication with the colleges with respect to prescribing and dispensing information with respect to the practices of some of their members.

The college stated during public hearings that, "What we know in other provinces where it has been successful is that the regulatory colleges have access to prescribing and dispensing information. It would seem to us to be leading to silos, if there is sequestered information that one body has that the other body doesn't have. Ideally, it would be helpful for the college to have access to the same information that the ministry would have, in terms of these drugs that are being prescribed. In the absence of that, there has to be, we think, free sharing of information."

Clearly, if the college is to be expected to do anything to deal with some of these issues, they need to be able to know about it, and the act doesn't specifically allow for that.

The official opposition—and the third party, I should note—did request an amendment to the preamble that was intended to recognize the role of the health regulatory colleges, but unfortunately, these amendments were ruled out of order due to other amendments that were voted down in committee by the government members. One such amendment that we did put forward—with respect to adding a subsection to require the government to report to regulatory colleges where prescribing and dispensing concerns were raised—was also defeated, unfortunately.

So that is still out there. That, I think, was an opportunity to really connect all the dots and really get all of the parties into the same loop so that we can really deal effectively with this problem.

One of the most significant issues that we heard people comment on before committee, and this was both by organizations and by a number of individuals, was with respect to the issue of chronic pain and the concern

that many individuals reported to us that they already have problems accessing pain relievers for their condition and that the impact of this act will be to restrict their access even more.

We did hear from a number of great presenters, but I would like to just comment on the presentation that was made by Dr. Angela Mailis-Gagnon, head of the comprehensive program of the Toronto Western Hospital University Health Network. She's a senior investigator with the Krembil Neuroscience Centre at the University Health Network, professor of medicine at the University of Toronto. She is also chair of the patient advocacy group for education and advocacy on neuropathic pain and chair of Action Ontario. She is a really impressive presenter, with significant credentials. She's also a member of the narcotics advisory panel that's advising the minister.

She came forward to the committee to express her concern that this legislation would cause doctors to fear prescribing pain medications to those who need them because of the restrictions being imposed by this legislation. Again, I'd like to quote some of her testimony before the committee because I think it's quite telling.

She said, "What we are facing is the dual tragedy of pain: We have a bunch of doctors or physicians or patients who abuse or overuse the medications, and we have hundreds of thousands of others who are under-treated. Opioids may make the difference between them being in bed and walking out. I have 92-year-old patients that I treat with morphine drops and I get all the hugs and the kisses because grandpa, instead of being in bed for eight years, is out there travelling to Holland. This is a reality: The dual tragedy of the bad management of pain is happening right now. That is what we cannot afford to miss."

1620

Again, I think this is something that, in the bigger picture, we really need to come to grips with and make sure we don't err too much on the side of caution, because there are many people who legitimately need to have narcotic medications in order to control their pain and be able to function.

We really have not properly dealt with this, and I think we will, especially in the face of this legislation. In fact, some people have indicated that we may actually see an increase in the need and people wanting to access methadone clinics, because that's going to be the only way they'll be able to get any kind of medication for pain control. So that is a problem we need to keep on our radar.

The other bigger-picture issue that I would like to address is the lack of coordination of programs and services out there for people suffering from mental health and/or addiction problems. Of course, overuse of prescription drugs is part of the addiction picture, but it often feeds into the mental health picture as well. That's what we tried to talk about in the select committee, where we proposed the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, which would be the umbrella organization

that would coordinate programs and services available to people who need mental health and addiction services across the province. As we heard in committee, consistently across the province there are many pockets where there isn't a basket of essential, core services available to people who need them, and we're seeing people really suffering as a result.

That's sort of the central premise of the select committee's recommendations. Most of the other recommendations flow from that, and we need to have this comprehensive strategy. For anyone who hasn't seen the report and is interested in it, it is available on the legislative website. It's called *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. I urge any members of the public who are interested in this issue to take a look at it.

Recommendation number 11 urges the government to take action with respect to prescription drug overuse. That has been done, but there are 22 other recommendations that I would urge the minister to deal with. A lot of them don't cost any money: things like establishing an expert task force to take a look at the issues around consent-to-treatment issues. That costs no money and can be done immediately.

We know that not everything can be done at once, but on behalf of the many people in Ontario who need these services, I would certainly urge the government to start work on the other aspects of the mental health and addictions piece, and we will be continuing to raise this issue in the months to come.

Those are my comments. I do appreciate the opportunity to comment today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I appreciated the comments that were made, and I just want to add that the member is touching on a bunch of points that our critic, Madam Gélinas, raised and that I wanted to raise myself; that is, the need to make sure we recognize it's not a one-size-fits-all solution for the different parts of the province. I think she pointed out, quite rightly, that how this plays out and how you're able to enforce this and deal with it in many communities across Ontario is going to be different. For example, for landlocked communities such as Attawapiskat and Sandy Lake and others, it's going to be a very different reality than trying to do that in downtown Toronto. For that reason, we believe that this bill, once it goes to committee, has to travel to some of these communities so that we can properly reflect the differences that are going to be needed in modifying the bill to make it work in those communities.

There are a number of things that are missing inside the bill, and those need to be touched on: the whole issue of regulatory colleges vis-à-vis the privacy issues; the whole issue of chronic pain management; the inadequacy of training and services around pain management; how interdisciplinary care in the primary care system comes into contact with dealing with this issue. The whole issue of methadone is one that really has to be looked at and

needs some pretty serious discussion. So there's a whole bunch of points, I think, that need to be dealt with at committee.

I guess I would say that we're supportive of the general initiative the government is putting forward, but I think the member put forward, quite rightly, that both the official opposition and the New Democrats are supportive of the bill but believe there need to be some changes modifying this bill to make it work. Clearly you can't have a one-size-fits-all approach to this particular problem, because although it is a problem that affects all of us, it affects us differently depending on where we live.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a privilege and a responsibility, of course, to speak on Bill 101, narcotics control. I speak, of course, not only as a physician but also as a parliamentarian.

First off, I appreciate the remarks from my opponents, the opposition members. I think they did bring some very important issues: who will monitor it; how it will be implemented; what the regulations are under which this framework will be set; how remedies will be set forth. I would just like to say, though, that while I of course, as a physician and a member of the government, support the idea of monitoring and regulating narcotic prescriptions across Ontario so that they are used appropriately for pain management and not for recreational enhancement, I would also just like to encourage the various boards, agencies and the bureaucracy here and the government of Ontario as this goes forward to not, if they might, put a chill into the hearts and minds of prescribers with regard to the dispensing of narcotic agents, including things like OxyContin and Percocet, when they are legitimately required for pain management. I think a lot of us need to understand that there is a pendulum to these things; that maybe there will be overprescribing and then if the government and other agencies react, then there's going to be underprescribing. We really need to strive to seek that balance, because I can tell you now that if, for example, a number of cases are made prominent in the press and so on, there will be a chill sent out over, for example, family physicians and other physicians across Ontario, where people who legitimately warrant these drugs—whether it's cancer pain, postsurgical pain, other forms of terminal illness, metastatic cancer; there's a whole host and protocol, as you can imagine—will unduly suffer. So I would invite the bureaucrats, going forward, to be mindful of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech by the member from Whitby-Oshawa on Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances. Certainly the member from Whitby-Oshawa did an excellent job of providing a critique on Bill 101

and very thoughtful comments as the health critic for the opposition.

Of course, she did refer to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, whose report I have a copy of here, and noted that it was a recommendation of that committee—which was an all-party committee that spent a lot of time travelling around the province and doing good work, with representatives of all three parties on it. One of their 23 recommendations was number 11: “The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers.” As the opposition, we're pleased to see the government moving ahead with that one of 23 recommendations, as was pointed out by the member from Whitby-Oshawa. We would look to see them move on others of the 23 recommendations as well.

I know in my community I have first-hand experience with people who have an addiction to things like OxyContin. It's certainly a fast-growing problem. I have seen first-hand how it has pulled families apart and made otherwise good people ruin their lives and made them into not necessarily the good people that they are at their core. So we certainly need to taken action to deal with this problem.

I'm pleased to see this bill going forward here now on third reading. The member did point out that it could have been better. There should have been travel around the north. Some of the privacy issues could have been dealt with more substantially. But that leaves more work to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for Whitby-Oshawa has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank the members from Timmins-James Bay, Etobicoke North and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their comments. I think all three made some important points here, with which I agree entirely.

The member from Timmins-James Bay made, quite well I think, the point that one size doesn't fit all; that there are issues in particular geographic parts of the province that require different approaches, and so we need to be mindful of that as we proceed with Bill 101 and make sure that we monitor its progress to make sure that the issue of prescription drug abuse is being addressed properly in all of our communities.

1630

I share the concern of the member from Etobicoke North about the need to maintain a balance between the abuse side of things and access for people who legitimately need pain relief. There is a concern that prescribers—physicians and other health care professionals—are going to feel very constrained as we go forward, and we don't want to limit access unnecessarily for people who truly need these medications.

The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, in referring to work of the select committee and the recommendations that were put forward by the committee, certainly

reflects a lot of concerns that he hears in his community, as we all hear, as members of our community, about both addiction and mental health issues. I think probably not a week goes by for any one of us that we don't hear about some of these issues, and sometimes there are tragic consequences.

So we really need to make sure that we pay attention to these recommendations. Maybe not every one can be fully implemented in the short term, but I think we need to really look at this as a long-term strategy and try to implement as many recommendations as possible as and when we can.

I thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member from Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to join in this debate and register, first of all, my appreciation to the members who have done a great deal of work on this bill, to my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa for her contribution and, of course, the members on the select committee who committed themselves to bringing forward recommendations. Ultimately, we want this bill to serve the best interests of Ontarians.

I am compelled, however, to register my concern. I do so on behalf of many practitioners who expressed concerns to me, and I know they did to other members of the Legislature as well, concerning one aspect of Bill 101, and that is with reference to the appointed inspectors being given the right to enter a doctor's office to seize and remove patient files. Quite frankly, I'm surprised. You know, we have two doctors here in the Legislature. I'm surprised that they have not raised this concern. It goes to the heart of privacy issues. It goes to the issue of confidentiality of patient records.

I think I can best make my point by quoting from a letter that I received from Dr. Paul Leger from Newmarket. He makes the point succinctly:

"Bill 101, which will allow an appointed inspector to enter a doctor's office and seize and remove patient records, is of concern to me.

"This violates patient confidentiality and the ownership of the chart by a physician. This is done without a warrant or a requirement for just cause to be shown. The inspector can remove any information that they deem to be significant, including personal and medical issues. Further, the minister and Lieutenant Governor can expand the scope to any other drug they wish to get information on and change regulations with minimal public input."

Dr. Leger goes on to speak about some alternatives that should be considered, and we may still have an opportunity to consider those alternatives. He refers specifically to a triplicate script and drug registry. I'd like to, again, just read into the record his recommendation:

"From a practitioner's point of view, there is a more direct and helpful way to monitor and control narcotic abuse and diversion. This is with a triplicate script and drug registry that physicians and pharmacists can both

access. This is what is used in other jurisdictions. The registry can be monitored by government and/or the College of Physicians and Surgeons. If there is a concerning pattern that can be followed up with physicians at that time, this does not require the level of intrusion that Bill 101 provides, and it works in other jurisdictions."

Dr. Leger implores us to consider this issue. My colleague the member for Whitby—Oshawa did in fact, in the course of committee hearings, propose an amendment to this legislation, and the for record and for the benefit of Dr. Leger and others who are concerned, I want them to know that my colleague Christine Elliott did move this amendment. I read from the Hansard of those proceedings for the benefit of members here as well as for the benefit of the record. Ms. Elliott moved as follows: "that subsection 13(2) of the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

"(2) An inspector shall not enter a prescriber's or a dispenser's place of practice for the purpose of determining compliance with the requirements of this act without first obtaining a warrant and without giving notice to the prescriber or dispenser of the inspector's intention to enter the prescriber's or dispenser's place of practice."

That amendment was suggested by the Ontario Medical Association. It was recommended by the OMA that a warrant be required before an inspector would proceed to exercise the powers under this act. That is a reasonable amendment and, like all of the other amendments that my colleague put forward, it was voted down by the Liberal members of the Legislature. It's unfortunate because I do believe that this amendment, and others put forward by my colleague, would in fact have improved this legislation.

We have the legislation before us. There is a risk to these powers of entry—warrantless powers of entry—that now are before us, and we're hopeful that perhaps with the passing of time the government will recognize the wisdom of the amendments proposed by the member from Whitby—Oshawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's always interesting to listen to the debate because members often raise issues that others don't even think about. I thought that was a rather interesting approach to the debate in regard to privacy, words that I think need to be heeded. I think it makes the argument well that there needs to be—although this is a bill that is sort of motherhood and apple pie, that we all support, we shouldn't try to rush this process so much by truncating the committee hearings in order not to allow for proper discussion about some of the issues that were raised. That is something that we need to take some time to do.

I don't think there needs to be huge, extensive hearings. It's not a question of putting this bill out to committee for years. But certainly it would serve us well to ensure that in the intersession this bill goes to some communities outside of Toronto to take a look at the

realities of how people see some of these issues, such as the issues of privacy that were raised by my friend and also other issues that were raised previously in debate, so that we all have an opportunity to hear how we can make this bill actually do what the government purports it wants it to do.

I recognize as well the issue of using these types of drugs that are fast becoming the cheap cocaine or the cheap drug of choice. There are huge, huge problems in our communities all across Ontario when it comes to the use of OxyContin and other types of drugs. I would support having some form of good hearings to allow us to look into how we can make this work in all our communities. I think the member raised an interesting point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do thank my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora for raising this point. We did raise a number of amendments in committee when Bill 101 came forward for clause-by-clause consideration and, unfortunately, all of the substantive amendments were turned down.

But the one that the member was referring to I think is particularly important in the context of the information that we received from the Information and Privacy Commissioner that in fact she was not happy with the final form of the bill and the warrantless search of physicians' offices, and her concern about this being the least intrusive way of proceeding to deal with this issue is one of the most serious concerns that we still have with respect to this legislation. When you think of the fact that someone can come in and take those files away, there are no protocols around what happens to it after that, who looks at it, who deals with it, who does what with it—these are very serious concerns that we've had commissions about in the past.

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I think it's most unfortunate that we didn't get the kind of proper consultation and due consideration of some of these issues, because this bill was pushed through very quickly and without the requisite travel and without hearing from all the people that we really need to hear from. But I really would like to flag this issue as one in particular, along with the other concerns expressed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, that we should certainly be listening to her as time goes on. It's too late for any amendments now, because we're in third reading, but if we get to the point where she raises significant flags, we'll certainly be raising it again in this House. I hope that we don't hear about it, but I have a feeling that we will, most unfortunately. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: In regard to the issues that were raised, especially for privacy, I would just like to remind all the members in the House that the overall strategy addresses the misuse of prescription narcotics and ensures their safe and appropriate use by patients

with medical needs and the professionals who prescribe them.

Now, as we've heard over and over, the abuse of these prescription narcotic drugs or painkillers has emerged as a public health and safety issue in jurisdictions all around the world, but I was really startled when I heard that across North America, the addictions, the crime, and the deaths related to prescription drug abuse have increased significantly in the recent years and that since 1991, prescriptions for oxycodone-containing products have risen 900%, and the number of oxycodone-related deaths has nearly doubled since 2004. Even more worrisome is the fact that the median age of patients who had a narcotic-related death was 40 years—40 years old, so that is quite young.

We need to reduce the abuse so that people who need the pain relief get it, but in the right doses and for the right length of time. Legislation under the narcotics strategy would, if passed, create a new database that would track all narcotics and controlled substances dispensed in Ontario. But I want to stress that in instances of inappropriate activity, responses would include educational support and resources. I think that's very important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Newmarket–Aurora has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to make it very clear, as I stated in my debate, that no one is arguing with the need to address abuse of drugs. I want to caution, however, that dealing with the abuse of drugs is no excuse to allow for an abusive process, and that's my concern here. We have it from the Information and Privacy Commissioner that she has serious concerns, and this, as the member from Whitby–Oshawa indicated, is clearly an incomplete part of this bill. There are far too many unanswered questions.

To my colleague's comment about it being too late—because we are in third reading—I'll state again that there is no such thing as a perfect piece of legislation. Even though it will pass third reading, I believe that this area is of significant importance, so much so that there is no reason that the government cannot on this particular case specifically enter into some additional consultation with stakeholders and, in fact, bring forward an amendment to this legislation to deal with that. I don't believe we should allow this simply to continue until such time as we're reacting to a serious breach of personal freedom—freedom of information and confidentiality. I think it is that important.

I just ask the government to focus on this, to listen to the concerns of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. She's an officer of this assembly, and I think it's important that we heed her advice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, I'll put the question.

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 101. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

We've had a request to defer this vote until Monday, November 29, 2010, after question period, during deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1646.

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Mr. Charles Sousa 3708

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Hospital services

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2014
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 29 November 2010

Lundi 29 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 novembre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the universal prayer of the Hindus.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today, in the east gallery from the great riding of Sarnia-Lambton, His Worship Mayor Mike Bradley, accompanied by Ms. Janis Moore and Ms. Kathy Meade, who are all visiting Queen's Park to speak about issues surrounding children's mental health and who also have an appointment with the Lieutenant Governor this afternoon.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have the distinct honour to welcome His Holiness Sheikh Salman Al Hussaini Al Nadvi, a Muslim scholar and imam from India, accompanied by Mr. Uves Sarehwala; Imam Dr. Saeed Faizi Nadvi of Richmond Hill; Imam Abdul Hai Patel, imam of the Canadian Council of Imams; Mr. Abdul Haq Ingar, president of Masjid Daruslam, Toronto; Imam Hafiz Faizanul Haq, imam of Alnadwah Centre in Mississauga; and Imam Yusuf Badat, imam of the Islamic Foundation of Toronto, to the House today. Please join me in welcoming the imams.

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Pam Blackstock and Kemp McMeekin. They're here as part of the delegation of the Association of Ontario Health Centres. Pam is the chair of the board of directors of the Merrickville District Community Health and Services Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome to the House today my friend and former employee Jason Corbett, who many will know from my constituency office, and a good friend of mine, Scott Clark, who are here today to enjoy question period.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to welcome Susan Wilson, Emily Wilson, Don Wilson and Ellen Dolan, who are here with our page from Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to welcome my family, who are visiting here today: my mother, Nuzhat Sadique; my brother, Ali Naqvi, from Halton; my uncle Waseem Sadique, who is visiting from the United Kingdom; and my uncle Naseem Sadique and aunt Birges Sadique, who are visiting from Bahrain. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really pleased to introduce today in the west gallery Mrs. Lee McKenna duCharme, who is with the Association of Ontario Health Centres. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I know that all members will want to welcome the many representatives from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, OUSA, who are visiting us here at Queen's Park, and a number are in the gallery today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Hamilton Mountain and page Alexandra Oleiche to welcome her mother, Fida Oleiche, to the gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Even kids know you can't run a lemonade stand buying lemons for 80 cents and then selling the lemonade for five cents, yet that's exactly what you are doing with Ontario's hydro system. How can you justify making Ontario families pay a markup of up to 20 times the market rate for power for your expensive wind and solar energy experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to remind my honourable colleague that we wait with bated breath in Ontario for the member opposite's plan. Perhaps at some point in time they will deign to join the debate in a thoughtful and responsible way by putting forward a plan.

In the meantime, we are moving ahead with ours and I'm very pleased that just last week, the honourable member's colleague the MPP for Cambridge joined us at yet another announcement for 150 new jobs flowing directly from our green energy plan. It was great to have the MPP for Cambridge there at the ATS factory in Cambridge, which is going to produce solar panels for a variety of customers. We're pleased that one by one, members of the Conservative Party are joining our plan because we have a plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you know that Ontario families are roundly rejecting your plan that is putting hydro rates through the roof in the province of Ontario. The Ontario PCs stand proudly with Ontario families in

saying that the consumer, not special interests, should be the centre of every decision.

Premier, you are signing, in a very ideological approach to energy policy, some of the richest subsidies in all of North America. You've signed subsidies with giant multinational foreign corporations like Ikea and Samsung at up to 20 times the market rate. On top of that, you are hitting families with the HST and the smart meters that are nothing more than tax machines on top of a 75% increase already. Premier, why are you signing contracts at a 2,000% markup that are going on the backs of Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The other thing that I wanted to inform this House is that when my colleague's energy critic, the MPP for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, was asked if power prices would be lower under a Conservative government, his response was, "No, we've never said that."

I think at some point in time there's going to be a breakout of rash reasonability in the Conservative caucus in Ontario. They're going to come to the conclusion that it actually costs money to restore vitality and vigour to our electricity system. They're going to want to come to the table and support our plan for a clean, modern, reliable electricity system. It's happening bit by bit: Rash responsibility is breaking out inside the Conservative caucus.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the Premier is taking a very ideological approach when it comes to energy policy. Your policy, Premier, is basically the wind and solar projects—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. We have a number of guests here today, Minister of Community Safety, who want to hear question period.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your ideological approach when it comes to energy policy is driving up rates across this province. Your view to sign contracts at any price whatsoever, to give massive subsidies to foreign multinational corporations like Ikea and Samsung, is absolutely irresponsible. It's wrong-headed and it's chasing jobs out of the province of Ontario.

1040

Premier, we view this as very much about economic policy: attracting jobs to our province and making sure, at the end of the day, that families can pay their hydro bills. When will you abandon your misguided "buy high, sell low" hydro policy that's driving rates up for consumers in our province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, maybe I'm old-fashioned about this, but I think if you're going to criticize, you've got a responsibility to put forward your own plan. They have had a long time to prepare a plan and there's none forthcoming.

I know my colleague opposite likes to refer to foreign multinationals, but in fact there are 10,000 Ontario farmers who are producing clean electricity for Ontarians. They are people like Dwayne Feddes. He's a dairy farmer in Goderich who also raises chickens. There are Geoff and Sandra Farrell, who are dairy farmers in Kincardine who also grow corn, soy and wheat. Wayne Wilson is a crop farmer in Uxbridge. Mr. Pandya lives in Mississauga—this is an example of somebody doing this inside the city. He is generating some electricity with nine solar panels on his roof.

We're talking about clean air, thousands of jobs and reliable electricity. That's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. Premier, you should know that Ontario families would rather make money selling food at a fair price than growing steel and glass across the province. You forced them into this corner because you won't support agriculture, and now you're driving up rates for consumers across the province, including Ontario farmers, who are paying far more.

Premier, your own advisers at the competitiveness, productivity and economic progress group are openly questioning your claim of 50,000 jobs. I think now you even admit that's not true. They're warning that the costs are going through the roof.

You cited Spain as a model for your energy experiments, but you know that the high-profile Calzada report found that for every so-called job they created in wind turbines or solar, it ended up costing 2.2 jobs in the economy as a whole. Premier, isn't it time to move away from your ideological approach to hydro, your "buy high, sell low"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Only the modern Conservative Party in the province of Ontario would consider a plan that is devoted to producing clean energy and clean air, to putting an end to that pollution, to creating tens of thousands of jobs, to ensuring that we have in place a reliable, modern electricity system—only they would reference that as ideology.

I think Ontarians see it as reasonable. I think they understand it's responsible. We know there are costs associated with this. We've laid those out for the next 20 years. In addition to that, we've laid out a particular plan to support Ontario families: our clean energy benefit. We're going to reduce every single electricity bill, from January onward for five years, by 10%. That's part of our plan.

If they have a plan, if they have any idea at any point in time of putting forward something that's thoughtful and responsible, we would love to see it. In the meantime, it's about our plan and it's about our determination

to ensure we have clean air and a responsible, reliable supply of electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, the problem with the Premier's approach is, quite frankly, nobody believes him anymore. Premier, you said you'd close coal by 2007; you broke that promise over and over again. You said that your green energy experiments, your expensive experiments, would drive up rates by only 1%; they've gone through the roof instead.

Premier, I know that you want Ontario to be more like Europe. I know that's your view, as Premier of the province, and that's why you're bringing in these expensive experiments. But even you know, despite your love affair with policies in other countries, that Denmark, for example, after 15 years of heavy subsidies, said only one in 10 so-called new jobs actually came to light. We've found out now that, in other countries like Germany and Spain, they've realized their rates were too high and they've backed away. But you are headlong down an ideological course. How many jobs are you costing the province with your high rate policy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we put forward a 20-year plan. We're the first government to ever do that. We laid out in real detail how much it's going to cost, where we're going to get the electricity from, what the sources will be and how much effort we're putting into conservation. We think that's the responsible thing to do. We think that's exactly what Ontarians want to see from their political leaders. They want to know what we plan to do and how exactly we intend to get there.

None of that is forthcoming from this party.

On behalf of the people of Ontario who are very interested in this public policy debate, they are now insisting that the Conservative Party here in Ontario put forward their own specific proposal. There is nothing there. It is not forthcoming.

We're moving ahead with our plan. We're doing it because it's the right thing to do, it's the responsible thing to do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable members from Nepean and Renfrew that it is important—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's from a previous outburst.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your determination to make Ontario more like Europe, your policy errors, already have us matching Greece's debt and now Spain's job losses. Premier, your very ideological approach of buying these contracts at any price whatsoever, of rewarding multinational, multi-billion dollar corporations like IKEA and Samsung with sweetheart deals is driving rates up for consumers across the province and costing us jobs. We simply disagree.

Premier, you cited Germany as one of the ways that you wanted to approach your hydro policy, but even

Germany's institute reports that the subsidies for their expensive energy experiments was a whopping US\$240,000 per job. That is unaffordable, Premier. That means it's on the backs of families, on the backs of seniors, on the backs of small businesses. We will stand on their side, as opposed to your special interest approach.

Why won't you abandon these expensive energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Euro-bashing coming from my honourable colleague is positively bizarre. I don't really understand that. Again, I think it expresses an innate fear of all things foreign.

I think there are some good ideas out there. We will draw lessons from experiences in other parts of the world, and we will apply those in an Ontario way. That's why 10,000 Ontario farmers have signed on to our green energy plan.

Again, we've got a specific plan. It's 68 pages long. We would be very interested in hearing from Ontarians—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I was saying, we put forward a plan. It's called Ontario's long-term energy plan. It's 68 pages long.

It may be that my honourable colleague is somewhat shy and reticent to reveal his plan publicly, so if he'd like to, he can send it to ontario.ca/energyplan. We would be pleased to receive his plan. We'll take it into consideration as we lend further strength to our own—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Since the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just remind the honourable members that we have a rotation in questions. Now it's the opportunity for the third party to have their questions. The opposition just had a question. I would just say to the government side, as well, that these cross-floor debates while somebody is asking a question aren't helpful to anyone within the House. I would ask that they be respectful.

Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Since the Premier's corporate tax cuts and unfair HST kicked in on July 1, more than 30,000 people have lost their jobs and 30% more Ontarians are unemployed since

the start of the recession. Will the Premier venture to say whether his plan is working?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's always more work to be done. I know my honourable colleague understands that. We have made some real progress. I would hope that she would understand that, as well.

Since the depths of the recession, the US economy has restored some 10% of their lost jobs. We've restored 75% of our lost jobs. We think that's significant progress. Obviously, there is more work to be done, but with every passing week there is more progress made. Step by step, we keep creating more jobs in Ontario.

A couple of weeks ago, I was in Hamilton. We announced 300 new jobs at JNE Consulting associated with our green energy plan. The folks who are going to be hired there are going to be hired to produce components that go into renewable technology. That's just one small example of the progress that we are making by working together.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier had a plan that he claimed would create 600,000 jobs. His plan hit people with a new tax on everything from hydro to haircuts while giving away \$2 billion in corporate tax cuts. But since his plan kicked in, London has lost 12,000 jobs, Kitchener-Waterloo has lost more than 7,000, and Windsor has lost more than 3,000.

Would the Premier agree that his plan is an expensive failure?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, bit by bit, we keep making progress. More and more communities, particularly insofar as our green energy plan is concerned, are benefiting from the new policy. We're creating thousands and thousands of new jobs, including in Hamilton, generating those jobs one by one. They're going to be involved in creating solar panels and wind turbines.

Our determination, our drive, is to make sure that we create a manufacturing centre of excellence here. At some point in time, the Americans are going to say, "We want to get involved in this too. We want to ensure that we have access to cleaner sources of energy. We want to do that by harnessing the power of the wind and the sun." We're going to be in a position to ship to them. Just in the way that we ship our cars to them today, we're going to be shipping to them wind turbines and solar panels made here in Ontario by people who are working at great jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The HST isn't the Premier's first failed plan. He had a plan to freeze hydro rates, but he has told families to brace themselves for a 50% increase. He had a plan to expand public transit, but he put the brakes on that plan with deep cuts. He had a plan to revolutionize long-term care, but stories regularly emerge of seniors being horribly mistreated.

Given his dismal seven-year record, why would Ontario families have any faith whatsoever that the Premier's latest plan will work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague that we await her energy plan as well. We've been debating this matter of public policy for a long, long time now. My honourable colleague has stood in her place in this Legislature many times over and offered criticism of our plan, but to this point in time, they have yet to put forward any positive, constructive proposal that might resemble a plan.

I'll tell you what we've done as well with respect to jobs: JNE Consulting in Hamilton, 300 jobs; Samco, 60 jobs here in Toronto; Canadian Solar, 500 jobs in Guelph; Sustainable Energy Technologies and Melitron, 300 jobs in Guelph; Fronius, 100 jobs in Mississauga to produce solar invertors; SMA Solar AG, 200 jobs; Canasia, 300 jobs in London to produce solar panels; Silfab, 200 jobs in Mississauga; Solar Source Corp., 200 jobs in Windsor; Solar Semiconductor, 200 jobs in Oakville. I could go on and on. The fact is, we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SMART METERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. If we were on Broadway, this seven-year run would be known as McGuinty's Follies, and the follies keep coming.

Take the government's plan for their so-called smart meters. It isn't working either. Windsor's hydro company, EnWin, announced it is delaying the switch to time-of-use rates. According to their director of regulatory affairs, they're waiting until "policy has worked itself out."

What exactly is Windsor's hydro company worried about?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's not it all. In fact, across this province local distribution companies have been—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's simply not the case. Local distribution companies right across this province have been doing a terrific job implementing smart meters: 4 million of 4.5 million smart meters have gone into homes across this province. It's gone smoothly, it's on time, and it's on budget, contrary to what the leader of the third party keeps trying to tell people. What you're saying is simply not true.

Now, we know that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Renfrew.

I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I should have said "inaccurate." Yes, I withdraw—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We need an unequivocal withdrawal, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I withdraw. I'm pleased to withdraw.

We know what's happened in Windsor. EnWin is totally aware of what's gone on there. They went to implement and installed smart meters in some homes that they probably shouldn't have. They're completely aware of that. We've been in touch with them, and the Ministry of Transportation has. They'll ensure that that doesn't happen again.

With the millions of smart meters going in across the province, I want to once again assure this Legislature that they're going in on time and on—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On August 4, the Ontario Energy Board issued a decision requiring more than 40 local distribution companies, including EnWin, to switch to time-of-use pricing by June 2011. But EnWin is ignoring the decision, saying they won't make the switch until December 2012. Their spokesperson says, "You don't often get rewarded for being on the cutting edge of those things." Why would a local utility be so reluctant to be on the cutting edge?

Hon. Brad Duguid: EnWin, like most local distribution companies, is owned by the city of Windsor. I'm sure the city of Windsor will want to ensure that EnWin is doing everything possible to ensure that the people of Windsor, like people right across this province, will be able to participate in these very important conservation measures: have the opportunity to shift their use and have the opportunity to save the system considerable amounts of dollars going forward, something that the NDP used to support.

Those were the days, when the NDP used to support conservation. Now, with this new leader of the third party, they've moved away from supporting conservation, just like they've moved away from supporting the investments we need to make in renewables, to build a cleaner, more modern system of energy. Clearly that party's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: EnWin is explicitly ignoring the Ontario Energy Board's decision to switch to time-of-use pricing by June 2011. Is the Premier concerned that a local utility, in the finance minister's own community, no less, is so concerned about the \$1.5-billion not-so-smart meter program that they're putting it off?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's very, very obvious that the formerly bright green party has gone absolutely dark.

The leader of the third party no longer stands for conservation, no longer stands for the need to encourage people to shift their use to off-peak times. She no longer supports renewable energy and the important investments that we have to make in that. She no longer supports our investments to modernize our energy system so we can ensure that Ontario families have a clean, modern energy system to drive us forward into a prosperous future. She doesn't support the thousands of jobs being created as a

result of these efforts: 300 in her own riding. She stands completely against those jobs. I think the Hamilton Spectator should be aware of that. I think her constituents should be aware of that.

Boy, that party has shifted a long way from those days when they believed in green energy, when they believed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion: How many hospitals have undermined your smoke-free Ontario policy by handing out contraband cigarettes to patients, like Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor has done?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was very shocked and I was very disappointed when I heard on Friday that the member opposite has chosen to continue the Conservative Party's drive-by smear campaign on front-line workers. But this time, they've gone the next step: Now they are attacking front-line mental health workers.

I think it is shameful. I think it is unacceptable. I actually would urge the member opposite to speak to his caucus colleagues who were part of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I would urge the member opposite to speak to the member from Whitby—Oshawa, to speak to the member from Dufferin—Caledon. These are members of the select committee on mental health. They came together in a non-partisan way. They listened to the challenges faced by people with mental illness. They listened to front-line workers; they listened to parents. They came up with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Peter Shurman: It is front-line health professionals who are blowing the whistle on the McGuinty Liberals turning garages into emergency rooms and allowing hospitals to hand out contraband cigarettes.

Luann Kapasi, communications coordinator for the hospital, admits the cigarettes came from a native reserve. And if you wonder what they look like, I'll send some over to you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows that props are not to be used.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yes, it was a prop.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Community Safety.

Please continue.

Mr. Peter Shurman: First, the hospital said there was nothing wrong with handing out the cigarettes, but then stopped doing it.

This is a government whose priorities have been to ban cigarettes from cars and apartment buildings but which turns a blind eye to the sale of tax-free contraband cigarettes, Minister. Now you allow them to be distributed at hospitals.

Which is more harmful: contraband cigarettes that you hand out at Hôtel-Dieu Grace, or the carbon monoxide fumes in your ER garages?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am constantly astonished by how low they go over there.

Let's get back to the issue that was raised. Michael Perley, the director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, a leader in smoke-free Ontario, says this: "Most physicians would agree that tobacco is very commonly used by people with mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, as a way to self-medicate.... 'Because it calms them down, reduces the anxiety.' He said to criticize hospitals for handing out cigarettes is far too simplistic."

On the issue of contraband, if in fact they are contraband, that is completely unacceptable. But I do remind the member opposite that the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, the member from Haldimand, the member from Oxford and the member from Renfrew all voted against the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. In its new report, the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction says the government "gave poverty reduction shorter shrift" this year, and went on to say that the government's "lack of decisive, timely initiatives ... suggests the government may have taken its eye off the prize."

The report shows that the government has only fulfilled seven of its 45 commitments required to reduce poverty; 25 in 5 criticizes the government for cutting the special diet allowance and for failing to invest in housing affordability, employment equity and income adequacy for social assistance recipients.

The question: Why is the McGuinty government giving this short shrift to poverty reduction?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank 25 in 5 for their report. We certainly look forward to reviewing it in more detail this afternoon. But I do want to put some quotes out, because the member opposite certainly hasn't been complete in what he says that 25 in 5 say, so let me tell you.

"Ontario was smart to stay the course on poverty reduction. Investments in the Ontario child benefit and minimum wage increases helped put dollars on Main Street, stimulating local economies at a time when they needed it most....

"Full-day kindergarten for children aged four and five is under way in many communities and a significant investment has been made in the next generation of Ontarians....

"Though more children and their families fell into poverty during the recession, government actions at the height of the economic downturn prevented many more from spiralling into deeper poverty than they would have without public assistance."

Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is also to the Premier: 25 in 5 is not the only coalition lamenting the lack of progress on poverty reduction. The Housing Network of Ontario is concerned that the government's new housing strategy will not set targets for the construction of new affordable housing units, will not put in place a housing benefit to make housing more affordable for low-income Ontarians, and will not allow municipalities to require that affordable units be part of new housing developments. Why should Ontarians believe the government's housing strategy will make a difference when its poverty strategy has failed to reduce poverty?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: We work every day on this side of the House to undertake the steps we put forward in our poverty reduction plan, which is a five-year plan, and we are coming up on the end of two years into that plan. That really differs us from the other side of the House, because there's no plan on that side of the House. The party opposite continues to act in a blind, partisan way, attacking the poverty reduction strategy simply because it's not theirs.

I can tell you that we're very proud of the steps that we've taken on this side of the House, again in contrast to the other side. They voted against six increases to social assistance; they voted against the creation of 22,000 affordable child care spaces; they voted against stabilizing the rent bank and providing 30,000 rent supplements; they voted against raising minimum wage; they voted against taking 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls; and they voted against the 2009 stimulus package, which invested \$1.2 billion in the affordable housing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week, the government presented its updated long-term energy plan. A key piece of that plan is the commitment to nuclear energy generating about 50% of our electricity. Central to that commitment is a need to procure new nuclear units in order to maintain that capacity and the reliability that Ontarians deserve and have come to count on.

I've had the pleasure of meeting with nuclear industry representatives at events like their supplier day, and more recently at AECL's awards dinner. Our nuclear industry is renowned the world over for their accomplishments in R&D and innovation. It's also a key economic driver.

Minister, Ontarians want vision and they want certainty when it comes to energy policy in the province.

Can the minister offer certainty with respect to nuclear power when it comes to sustaining its supply and reliability?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member from Mississauga South is absolutely correct. Modernizing our nuclear fleet is essential to ensuring that Ontario has the reliable base-load power that it needs going forward.

Our long-term energy plan affirms our commitment to purchase two new nuclear units at Darlington and support the refurbishment of 10 others to guarantee this supply. Unfortunately for all Ontarians, the federal government has made this process significantly more difficult than it needs to be with their decision to sell off AECL.

While the Leader of the Opposition's advice to us is that we should have purchased those units at a price way too high, I think the Leader of the Opposition and his party are the only impulse nuclear shoppers in this province today. We're determined to ensure that we do that at a fair price. The Premier, myself as Minister of Energy, and others in this government have gone to the federal government and said, "We need you to work with us to make this happen." The only people silent on this have been the Tories—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: It's indeed unfortunate that the federal government is playing antics with such an important institution, one that employs over a thousand men and women in the city of Mississauga alone. The nuclear industry in Canada earned over \$1.2 billion in exports in 2008 and generates tremendous economic activity through trickle-down business.

Certainly the province's commitment to nuclear energy comes with a host of economic benefits, as well as offering reliability to our electricity system. Yet there are those in this House who do not support emissions-free nuclear energy, even though half our power comes from this reliable source. Those same critics, who have offered no plan or alternatives, also stand clearly opposed to the economic benefits of having a robust nuclear industry here in Ontario.

Minister, will you ensure that the economic benefit is fully taken into account with the overhaul of Ontario's energy supply system?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The economic benefits of modernizing and maintaining our nuclear capacity simply can't be ignored. In a report released this year, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters estimate that the employment and economic benefits of refurbishing and modernizing our Darlington and Bruce reactors will result in some 25,000 Ontario jobs and \$5 billion in annual economic activity. Twenty-five thousand jobs: That's like the population of Owen Sound. In fact, the Canadian nuclear industry supports about 70,000 jobs nationwide, about 80% based right here in the province of Ontario.

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All political parties in this House should be supporting those 70,000 Canadian workers in this industry. All political parties and leaders in the House should be

beseeking Ottawa that they, like us, should be standing behind this nuclear industry in Ontario, standing behind those 70,000 workers. From the Leader of the Opposition—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ILLEGAL DRUG OPERATIONS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier of Ontario. Under your watch, at any given time there are nearly 500 clandestine drug operations, either grow ops or drug labs, turning Ottawa homes into crime scenes—at any given time, Premier. This past fall, \$1.2 million worth of marijuana was seized at a grow op in London while another \$14 million was seized in Durham.

The time to crack down and protect Ontario families from the devastating effects of these illegal drug operations, whether it's health and safety or other criminal acts, is now. That's why I'm going to ask you: Will you support Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus plan to force these drug operations out of business and create a province-wide registry that will target them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think we would recognize that all members of the Legislature and all members of the public take very seriously the issue of grow ops, which in recent years have become an even greater concern. As well, all of us met—at least, as many as could—with representatives of the Ontario Real Estate Association, which has had many suggestions as to how these matters could be solved, and members of police services across the province.

Whenever a private member's bill is introduced in the House, of course, we ensure that there's a full debate. I know the member will be looking forward to all members of the Legislature contributing to that debate, analyzing the bill carefully and making an ultimate judgment on it. But I can assure you that our government has taken many steps forward in this direction to eliminate grow ops and to deal with the very issues that the member has brought to our attention.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If the minister agrees that it is of greater concern today, that means you need to do more. If you want to reference the real estate association of Ontario, then you'll realize that this is the bill they have endorsed and they're behind.

Illegal drug operations also mean that hydro is being stolen from everyday, hard-working Ontario families who are playing by the rules. In British Columbia, it is estimated that over \$100 million a year in electricity is stolen to support illegal drug activity in that province. Without a proper registry tracking these crime scenes, the Premier and the minister don't know how many tens of millions of taxpayer dollars are being stolen from Ontario families to support these illegal drug operations.

Will you support the Ontario PC plan to target these drug operations and rid their illegal activity from every

community from Ottawa to Thunder Bay, and everywhere in between?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's very interesting—and I know your energy critic will find this interesting—that one of the greatest steps forward in terms of police being able to detect grow ops has been smart meters. Smart meters have alerted the police to potential grow operations in the province.

I can tell you as well that we have a provincial advisory group amalgamated with the Green Tide Action Group to fight grow-ops. We've hired 148 new police officers to fight grow ops and other organized crime. We're getting results. In 2009, 500 grow ops and meth labs were shut down, 490 guns were seized, almost \$10 million in cash and property were seized, and drugs worth \$227 million were seized. We passed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Stop the clock, please.

I'm troubled at reminding the same members on both sides of the House over and over again. Certainly, the pages note it. I read a very interesting article in the Woodstock Sentinel Review of former pages making note of that. I'd just ask honourable members—the occasional interjection is often very good for this place, but constant interjections are not helpful to good debate in this chamber.

New question.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

After weeks of the government responding to rather embarrassing questions over hospitals paying Liberal-friendly lobbyists exorbitant hospital consultant salaries—then we heard of exotic trips and fancy meals on the public dime—the government went into damage control and brought in a bill that would bring hospitals under freedom of information. But then the government time-allocated the bill to limit debate, rushed through the public consultation phase—we never did hear from the Ottawa specialists—and then on Friday, they brought in a last-minute amendment. This is my only chance to ask: What will the minister's amendment do?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is actually a very good question, and one that I'm happy to respond to.

I'm very proud that this government acted very quickly when the Auditor General came in with his report on practices that were happening in our hospitals; practices that simply were unacceptable. I'm very pleased that we were able to introduce that legislation. We actually went further than the Auditor General recommended, and we are including hospitals in freedom-of-information legislation.

We're working very hard in our health care sector. We're really starting with hospitals, to improve the quality of care in our hospitals. This is something that is not just better for patient care, it's also better for the

system as a whole. So we're trying to strike the right balance between transparency and giving the hospitals the tools they need to do this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I guess the limited debate in the question didn't really answer my question. I want to know: What will the amendment do?

When I talk to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who is the Ontario expert on these matters, she makes it clear that quality-of-care information would continue to be protected in hospitals without any amendment to the bill.

There are dozens and dozens of agencies, there are universities, there are boards and there are commissions that are subject to freedom of information, so with the amendment and the minister's logic, does that mean that all of these agencies are not able to improve quality because they are subject to FOI?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the first question, we introduced this legislation and we have spent a lot of time since then listening to people and organizations that would be directly impacted by that. I know the member opposite was in committee. She heard representation from various stakeholder groups who had concerns that their quality initiatives would be jeopardized if we did not actually—not exclude, but exempt certain information from being part of freedom of information.

This is very important legislation. This is a very important, big step forward. It's important we get it right; that we protect patient privacy. I'm very pleased that the Information and Privacy Commissioner is, in fact, supporting our amendment.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, the need to keep hazardous waste material out of the landfill is obvious: It takes up valuable space, it's a waste of our resources and it poses a potential threat to our drinking water if not handled properly. However, the costs associated with proper disposal should only be used to dispose of that product.

Some retailers are taking advantage of people wanting to do the right thing: They refused to refund the disposal charge when my 72-year-old constituent returned an alarm clock. My question is very simple: Why don't retailers have to refund the collected disposal fee when consumers return an electronic product?

Hon. John Wilkinson: If you want to know a member of this House who fights for his constituents, it's the member for York West. I want to thank him for fighting for his constituent until he got the refund that he was rightfully entitled to. Thank you for being on the side of the consumer and for bringing this to my attention so my ministry could deal with and help you resolve this issue.

This is really about the incorrect actions of a particular retailer, so let me be crystal clear: All retailers must

refund the full cost charged to consumers, period. I was appalled by the actions of the retailer in this case. There is absolutely no excuse for not returning the entire amount, absolutely none. A refund is a refund is a refund in the province of Ontario, and I am requesting that retailers correct any other incidents like this. Simply charge the correct fee, and when a product is returned, return the entire amount, period. I want to thank the member for York West.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Minister, I appreciate your clearing up the confusion and I also want to echo the minister's disappointment. It should not have taken Mr. La Valle contacting me and me contacting the minister before something was done. Thank you for reiterating that disposal charges are supposed to be collected specifically for the future disposal of that product, nothing more, and should be returned when the electronic is returned to any retailer.

But, Minister, this incident raises a larger question about what recourse and protection consumers have if they are being overcharged on fees or in any other way being taken advantage of by a retailer. Consumers need to know that the government is there to help them. Would the minister tell us just what the government is doing to assure consumers that they are being protected?

Hon. John Wilkinson: First, I personally wrote to Ontario Electronic Stewardship and requested they review the fees that they were charging on their products. As of December 1, the new fee will be 40 cents. I also told Waste Diversion Ontario to work with the industry-funded organizations to ensure all retailers have correct return policies.

Second, I implemented a number of consumer protection measures when I cancelled the July 1 program back in October. We have a consumer protection hotline so consumers can report any suspicious fees, and the special team I created investigates each and every one of these complaints. I requested that a consumer representative be added to the boards that run each and every one of these programs. Let me reiterate: There should be a consumer on every one of these boards that is run and funded by industry. If they did that and they listened to their customers, they would not have the problems they are having today.

We are committed to diverting hazardous waste from our landfills in a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, at a time when identity theft and fraud strike fear into Ontario families, your government has shown it can't be trusted with basic information such as a driver's licence. The Toronto Star has reported 93 cases of licence fraud in your Ministry of

Government Services; 93 Ontarians have had their personal information stolen right under the government's watch.

My question to you, Minister: Can you explain why so many of your problem systems are leaving Ontario citizens vulnerable to identity theft?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking the question. I cannot speak of any specific cases if the matter is under investigation, but I want to tell you we are very concerned about the security of any information from any of our citizens, and whenever it comes to our notice, we take immediate action.

There was an example of the address changes happening not in the right way. We immediately shut our systems down and put the systems in place so that we could correct the information and these things don't happen again. We are very concerned about it. We take immediate action and we have systems in place that actually protect the privacy and the information of citizens.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, you should be concerned. In one instance, an address was changed to an abandoned strip club. The victim had no idea and only learned of the fraud six months later.

Not only is the minister failing to protect the privacy of information of Ontarians; he's also hiding it from those affected. The privacy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the reference that he just made to the minister.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, he shouldn't be hiding it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw. He has not made the information available, and the privacy commissioner is clear that the system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need help. You're heckling so much that you can't even hear. I heard the honourable member withdraw. It wasn't loud, but I heard him. I don't need help from armchair ministers who would like to be Speakers. Do you know what? I very much would love to give you the opportunity to come and sit in this chair and experience how much fun it is.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies, Minister, or—

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Speaker.

Clearly, the privacy commissioner says the system is flawed and leaves Ontarians dangerously exposed. I'm going to ask you again, Minister, to explain to Ontarians why your ministry is leaving this information exposed to theft and fraud under your watch.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me tell you, I think as soon as it came to our attention, we shut down the system.

We worked very closely with the privacy commissioner to address this issue, and this is what she said: "I applaud ServiceOntario for taking this necessary step...."

"We commend MGS for its decision to shut down the address change function for driver's licences available from both the ServiceOntario website as well as the ServiceOntario kiosks, and for its prompt response to this incident, including contacting affected individuals. We further note that MGS has co-operated fully with the IPC over the course of this investigation."

Let me just say more. She said further, "MGS stated that both systems would remain shut down until the improvements had been" made.

That's exactly what we did. We made sure that the information is protected, and we worked with the privacy commissioner to make sure that she was involved every step of the way.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Lifecare Centres is about to sell off seven long-term-care homes, two of which are located in the city of Hamilton. What will the McGuinty government do to ensure that Hamilton does not lose a single long-term-care bed as a result of this pending sale?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. When it comes to long-term care, we really are determined to make sure that people do, in fact, have access to long-term care as close to home as possible.

The licences that go with long-term care are—we take control of those licences. We do not allow the transfer of licences outside of the LHIN, unless there is a very compelling reason to do that. We monitor this extremely closely.

I can tell you that we're determined to have the highest quality of care in long-term care and also to have accessibility as close to home as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The St. Joseph's Villa family council in my community and the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly are very concerned about the sale of long-term-care beds. The lack of information around this sale and the impact it will have on Hamilton seniors as well is very, very frightening. "Our seniors deserve better than this," the council said in a recent letter to the Minister of Health. The current proposal means moving 92 beds from St. Olga's Lifecare Centre in Hamilton to Cama Woodlands Nursing Home in Burlington.

Why won't the government make all of the conditions of this sale public to ensure Hamiltonians that no long-term-care beds will be lost in our community, particularly acknowledging that we also have an alternate-level-of-care-bed crisis in our city?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to this particular case, I will undertake to get more information and speak to the member opposite about this particular situation.

What I can tell you is that we and our LHINs are very, very focused on reducing ALC rates in our hospitals. This is a big challenge for our hospitals and for our

LHINs. The problem is in the hospital; the solution, however, is in the community. So we are building up supports in the community to support people. We are expanding capacity in long-term care. As I say, this particular case is one that I will look into more carefully.

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. There are 20 First Nations in my riding, and it's important that I have the opportunity to speak with them on important issues, which I do on almost a daily basis. But it was important to have them all in one place here in Toronto last week. Last week, I was able to participate in your First Nations cabinet day meetings and was able to meet with a number of chiefs at the same time—not just from my riding, but from across the province. It was a great opportunity for me to hear updates on important issues from the various communities in one afternoon.

I understand the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with First Nations as constituents and community partners. For example, I had the opportunity to meet with Minister Gravelle and yourself, Minister, with the First Nations from Michipicoten and from Pic Mobert.

I want to know, Minister, can you tell me how this day came—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has been developing relationships with First Nations for years, over thousands of kilometres.

It's really important that we have the opportunity for First Nations to meet, not just once a year but all year, with members of the government.

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One of the things that my predecessor, now the Minister of Energy, heard last year when we attended the Special Chiefs Assembly was that it would be helpful, from the perspective of First Nations, to be able to interact at that assembly with my cabinet colleagues. I'm pleased to say that from what I understand was their first time at the chiefs' assembly, 17 of my cabinet colleagues were available for meetings, for the reception, and that almost 100 separate meetings with ministers took place. This is reflective of a very strengthened relationship.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Thank you, Minister. I was delighted to see so many of my colleagues—MPPs and ministers—attending the meetings and the reception afterwards. I'm sure we all had a productive day with the exchange of information.

But I'm very surprised that five years after agreeing to it, the federal government has not had a similar meeting with First Nations and Premiers across the country. Our Premier meets every year with aboriginal leadership and organizations to discuss important issues, and our

Premier has asked the federal government on several occasions to hold a federal meeting on aboriginal issues.

Will the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs tell this House what else the government is doing to strengthen its relationship with First Nations?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The much-strengthened relationship is a result of Premier McGuinty's direction, his acceptance of the Ipperwash recommendations and his determination that all peoples residing in Ontario need to work together for a much-strengthened province.

We stood shoulder to shoulder with First Nations and said to the federal government that we want to continue the exemption under the HST, the point-of-sale exemption, that existed since 1980. It was that, working together with First Nations, that enabled us to turn the federal government's position around.

We stand together with First Nations in attempting to realize greater economic opportunities for our \$45-million training partnership fund that we got in the last budget, and we'll stand with First Nations on the education issue, but we need the federal government to be a real partner in this work. We need the federal government to do what it needs to do under the Constitution to strengthen—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Energy. In rural Ontario, there is a lot of concern about the lack of community input surrounding where wind turbines are placed. We also understand that landowners can opt out of the setback rules.

Will you ensure that setbacks are consistent across Ontario, regardless of where you live?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We put in place one of the most stringent setback rules in all of North America when it comes to wind turbines, not only on setbacks but in terms of noise standards as well. It's a model for North America, it's among the strongest in this province and it's something that—and I encourage the member, because I know it's tough for her, not having a plan of her own, to be able to talk about things like wind and energy, to go to ontario.ca/energyplan to see what an energy plan is about.

In that plan, we talk about the important role that wind energy will play in creating thousands of jobs across this province and helping to build a cleaner province, a more prosperous province, for ourselves and for the next generation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, you know that your energy plan has been panned by experts across Ontario. The Green Energy Act left setbacks for turbines to be set by regulation. Can you share with the House what criteria cabinet used to determine 550-metre setbacks for homes and five-kilometre setbacks for offshore? It wouldn't have anything to do with the fact that the member from

Scarborough Centre sits in cabinet and your change has eliminated any possibility of a turbine being sited in his riding, would it?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's beyond ridiculous, but let me return to the long-term energy plan, because some of the comments that the member made are simply inaccurate.

I look at comments from Rodney Sheppard, president of the Society of Energy Professionals. This is what he said about our plan: "Clean nuclear power and hydro-electricity are the foundation of Ontario's electricity supply....This announcement signals a return to rational long-term planning in the province's electricity policy." This is going to create a lot of jobs—good jobs—for a lot of people, the kind of jobs we all want our kids to get.

I have lots of quotes here. Let me share with you what Adam White, president of the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, said: "Competitive electricity rates are an absolute priority for AMPCO members. The plan sets out a framework to create a reliable, economically viable electricity system for Ontario. This plan"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. A couple weeks ago, I brought to your attention the condition in Attawapiskat in regard to 90 families living in contractors' trailers. You since responded to that letter and said you will do everything to work with the federal government in order to respond to the problem.

You will know that there was a fire in Kashechewan, where two men died in a jail. There was a coroner's inquest that flowed from there. One of the recommendations under the coroner's inquest says that Canada and Ontario should work together to ensure that standards and service levels in First Nations communities are equivalent to those in non-First Nations communities in Ontario. Is it going to take another fire and another death before we decide that the standards in Attawapiskat should be the same as for every other citizen in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'll answer this as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I think my friend raises an interesting point, but his ire is directed to the wrong place. He knows well that most of the services and issues, including the housing issue raised in his letter, are directly the responsibility of the federal government. I understand that he wants to direct the questions to this side of the House because he can't get the feds to listen, but the fact of the matter is, we've got to get the federal government to listen. We've got to get the federal government to take these issues seriously. We've got to get the federal government to stand up, whether it's water standards or housing standards for First Nations. It is absolutely unacceptable that federal infrastructure

funding for housing needs, for example, has been flatlined instead of going up to meet the needs of the population. Call on the federal government, I say to my friend, to live up to their constitutional—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: If you're walking down the street and you see somebody about to be murdered, do you walk away and say it's somebody else's responsibility? The issue is that these are citizens of the province of Ontario. As citizens of the province of Ontario, they are entitled to the full protection of the law. The problem here is that you're right: You have a federal government that's uninterested and unwilling to do anything. But does that absolve the responsibility of the Legislature of Ontario and this government to ensure that those citizens are safe? There are fire standards everywhere in this province. I'm asking you, will you enforce those on reserve?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Once again, my friend uses the opportunity to direct his comments to where they cannot be most effectively met. It is tempting, yes, I know, for the government of Ontario, speaking on behalf of the people of Ontario, to try and jump in everywhere that the federal government refuses to live up to its constitutional responsibility. All that means is that we're filling in the potholes the federal government leaves behind and we're not making the progress that my friend and this government are determined to make. I call on the NDP to join with us and First Nations in getting the federal government to live up to its constitutional responsibility, to live up to its moral responsibility, to do something to assist First Nations on First Nations lands in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. Just before we deal with a deferred vote, I want to apologize to the House. I recognize that, as Speaker, it's important for me to bite my tongue at times and not go off the way that I did, and I apologize to all members for that.

DEFERRED VOTES

NARCOTICS SAFETY AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA SENSIBILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 101. All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol
Bailey, Robert	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Best, Margaret	Hardeman, Ernie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Jones, Sylvia	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Komos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mauro, Bill	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	McGuinty, Dalton	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Yakubski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 69; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It gives me great pleasure to introduce in the member's gallery Darla Campbell, who's a former member of the Oakville Chamber of Commerce, and her daughter Natalie Campbell, who's in grade 5 at Munns Public School. If we give them a warm Queen's Park welcome, I'm sure they'd appreciate it.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I would just like to stand up and welcome several people from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing who are with us today in the public gallery. They have been instrumental in the work we are doing with regard to the long-term affordable housing strategy, and I just wanted to publicly acknowledge them and thank them for their great work.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce Lee McKenna duCharme from the Association of Ontario Health Centres.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): She also has her roots in the great riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SMART METERS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I stand in the House today to again address the very concerning issue of how smart meters penalize those who are at home during peak hours: folks such as seniors and stay-at-home parents with young children.

As of November 1, Ontarians are paying 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour for their electricity from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., it reduces slightly to 8.1 cents per kilowatt hour. From 9 p.m. to 7 a.m., when most Ontarians are sleeping, the cost drops to 5.1 cents per kilowatt hour.

The McGuinty Liberals say that they are “encouraging us all to think more about how and when we use electricity” and “how working together to reduce our use at peak times makes good sense.”

What doesn't make good sense to me is expecting working parents to pay 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour to bathe their children, cook dinner or do their laundry unless they wait until after 9 p.m.

I don't know what dictionary the Premier is using to define “working together,” but he's certainly not working together with our seniors and families, and he's forcing them to keep the heat off till 9 p.m.

It's shameful that this government continues to place the biggest burden on Ontarians who are unable to alter their lifestyle in order to accommodate this Premier's new rate system.

NORTH YORK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to speak today about the launch of a bold new technology program at North York General Hospital.

On November 17, I, along with Monte Kwinter, spoke at the launch of eCare at North York General. eCare is an innovation designed to improve patient safety, reduce medication errors and provide clinical staff with the latest evidence-based information to inform their decisions.

eCare will replace the traditional manual system and administration of medication. Using the most advanced and up-to-date medical literature, information and technology, North York General is raising the standard in patient care. The new technology captures orders electronically, records medications that have been administered, documents prescriptions and streamlines the work of doctors and nurses at the hospital.

eCare will transform the way hospitals treat and care for patients, ultimately helping people get better faster and saving lives. To quote Dr. Tim Rutledge, the interim president and CEO, “eCare is a significant step forward

in patient safety, quality of care and achieving a paperless medical record.”

I commend North York General Hospital's initiative and all of the medical professionals, physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other support personnel involved in bringing eCare to fruition. The leadership and efforts of North York General Hospital are a true reflection of the unwavering commitment to patient care from a first-class institution.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Randy Hillier: Joel Shaw is an intelligent young man in my riding who has been home-schooled. He wants to take part in an apprenticeship program and has an employer, MacPherson's Auto in Carleton Place, that is willing and eager to hire him because of his excellent work ethic, high aptitude and skill level. However, this government stands directly in the way of his employment. This Liberal government will not let Joel work at MacPherson's Auto.

Since April of this year, Joel and his father, Kevin, have endeavoured to satisfy the requirements of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, but they can't because the MTCU doesn't know what they require. In seven years, the MTCU still has not developed a protocol or a process to recognize homeschoolers to become apprentices.

Government must be a facilitator of the economy, not an obstacle that comes between a willing worker and a willing employer. When will this government get out of the way of people seeking opportunities? When will the government return to its role of preventing injustice instead of, like in this case of Joel Shaw, creating injustice?

PEEL CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise to recognize the efforts of the Peel Children's Centre, which is an accredited children's mental health centre serving the region of Peel. This organization has done a lot of great work in my riding and all around Peel.

On November 9, Peel Children's Centre celebrated the beginning of construction of a residential treatment facility for elementary-aged schoolchildren with serious mental health challenges. Many children who have mental health challenges will have a new safe place with professional mental health specialists to assist in their recovery. This facility will have an area where families can have group counselling in order to try to get families back together. In situations where this is not possible, the mental health professionals will help children learn to deal with their issues in order for them to be integrated into a foster home.

This project could not have happened without the financial support of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I wish to thank the minister for her support of this project, and members of my community. Without their support, this project would not have come to fruition.

Once again, congratulations to the Peel Children's Centre. Thank you for your commitment to help children who have mental health issues.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK

Mr. John O'Toole: Last Friday, I had the pleasure of participating in Local Democracy Week here at Queen's Park. Local Democracy Week is all about educating our youth on how democracy can be a force for positive change in their lives and in the life of our community.

On Friday, students had the opportunity to tour the Legislative Assembly, meet with the Clerk and officers of the assembly, learn about the election process from the Chief Electoral Officer and hear a keynote address from Free the Children's Marc Kielburger.

I was joined by grade 10 students from Bowmanville High School in Durham last week, and I'd like to thank their teacher, David Rempel, for the many years he has made learning an experience for his children and how they've gained an understanding of democracy and how it works. I commend Mr. Rempel for his professional instruction to our students, including my children in the past. One of the students, Shannon Thompson, a former Leading Girls, Building Communities Award recipient, was among the students from Bowmanville High School attending Local Democracy Week.

I'd also like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and your staff, including Maggie Head, for all the hard work in ensuring that Local Democracy Week was a success. I want to encourage, and encourage strongly, all students who participated and visited Queen's Park to be active participants in our democratic process. Whether it's being active in your community, running for office or helping someone run for office, or making an informed vote at election time, I would ask that all people in Ontario stay involved and stay connected.

ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO HEALTH CENTRES

M^{me} France G  linas: I would like to welcome the Association of Ontario Health Centres to Queen's Park and congratulate them on the great work that they do. AOHC represents non-profit, community-governed, multidisciplinary primary health care organizations, including Ontario's community health centres, aboriginal health access centres, community family health teams, as well as the Sudbury District Nurse Practitioner Clinics.

They believe that effective primary health care addresses the social determinants of health, including social inclusion, access to shelter, education, income and employment security, food, and a stable ecosystem. The model encompasses primary care, illness prevention and health promotion, and uses a community development approach to building healthy public policy in supportive environments. Their vision is rooted in a care model that provides comprehensive primary care services delivered by interdisciplinary teams of professionals practising within the health promotion framework.

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The goal of AOHC is simple: to ensure that more Ontarians have access to primary health care through community-governed health centres that are non-profit and publicly accountable.

Unlike the traditional fee-for-service models, community-governed models of primary care pay salaries and benefits to physicians and other staff.

It is about the right service at the right time by the right provider. Congratulations to AOHC for the great work they do.

MOHAMAD FAKIH

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for allowing me to share a story of a Ontarian and a successful businessman. His name is Mohamad Fakih. Mr. Fakih is the founder of the famous Mediterranean restaurant chain in the GTA called Paramount Fine Foods.

On a yearly basis, he serves millions of Ontarians. Also, despite the downturn of the economy, he was able to hire more than 100 people to work in his restaurants; amongst those people the best chefs in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Fakih believes strongly in this province as the best place to live, to do business and to maintain a vibrant and successful economy. He has a philosophy: to help others. He has generously helped many organizations, whether religious institutions, sports groups or places for communities.

I want to congratulate Mr. Fakih for his success in the province of Ontario. I wish him all luck. Hopefully, many others will follow his steps.

CANADIAN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today the Canadian Educational Resources Council, or CERC, for their very first Queen's Park Day.

CERC is known as the voice of Canada's learning resource industry, representing the major educational publishers in Canada. Its members produce roughly 80% of the student learning resources that are currently used in Canadian schools.

I would like to thank CERC's executive director, Dr. Gerry McIntyre, for the excellent exhibit of educational resources he has arranged for everybody today here at Queen's Park and for the work he does on behalf of CERC members.

CERC's members play an important role in applying innovation and technology and lessons learned from front-line teachers to classroom resources. CERC has provided us with opportunities to see first-hand some of the resources that are transforming education today. I have CERC involved with some of the new technology at Joyce Public School in my riding, one of the best public schools in the whole universe.

I encourage all members to visit CERC's learning resources exhibit in committee room 2 between 2 and 4 p.m.

There you will have an opportunity to try out the smart boards—that might be a good idea for some of the members here—laptops and other innovative resources that are transforming modern education.

Be sure to attend CERC's reception today from 5 to 7 p.m. in committee room 2. All are welcome. I look forward to seeing you all there. Let's check out those smart boards.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to correct the record.

I have had the absolute pleasure of representing the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the various communities within my riding since 2003. I'm very proud of the numerous parks, recreation centres, good schools and hospitals, businesses and several tourist attractions that make it a great place to live and a great place to visit.

This is why I was very disappointed when the member from Beaches–East York stood up in the Legislature on Wednesday of last week and made accusations about a hotel and restaurant in my riding—

Mr. Michael Prue: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If the member is correcting the record, he has to correct his own record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is correct, but this is a member's statement.

Mr. Jim Brownell: This member accused the Best Western in Cornwall of stealing the wages of their servers when he reported “that the hotel takes 2.5% of the gross bill and it steals the wages of the servers, whether or not an actual tip is given.”

The member must not be aware that when he makes these types of accusations, especially with a business with high standards and service beyond reproach, he is potentially tarnishing the reputation of hundreds of businesses across this province.

Employers and their staff are always working very hard to create a friendly and respectful atmosphere which everyone can enjoy, and I know that the folks at the Best Western Parkway in Cornwall go above and beyond their service to patrons in the community.

I think the member owes an apology to Mr. Paul Lefebvre and his entire staff at the Best Western Parkway in Cornwall. His comments were completely disrespectful and only used for his own political agenda.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: During ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I rise to introduce legislation that would, if passed, build a strong foundation for an improved housing system that better serves Ontarians. Safe and affordable housing can help people break the cycle of poverty. It provides the foundation families need to raise their children and pursue education, jobs and more opportunity.

The proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act would establish a new framework that strengthens our role as stewards of Ontario's housing system, while giving our municipal partners the flexibility to meet the unique needs of their communities.

The strategy and the bill I introduce today are a result of our province-wide consultations. This bill is a key element to our long-term affordable housing strategy, which I announced today at the Wesley Centre, a drop-in centre serving homeless and other at-risk men and women. I applaud Wesley Centre staff for the tremendous work they do.

Poverty is a complex problem that needs to be tackled from a number of different angles. The McGuinty government continues to work hard to break that cycle of poverty. Cuts to the personal income tax, investing in job creation and retraining, the introduction of the Ontario child benefit, the Ontario sales tax credit and Ontario's poverty reduction strategy—these are all initiatives that are making a difference for low-income families. We are the first to acknowledge that there is more to do, but with this commitment, our government is making another important contribution to this cause.

The proposed legislation would repeal the outdated Social Housing Reform Act, which creates barriers to people in need. The current legislation gets in the way of providing effective services and doesn't address the full housing continuum. The new legislation would simplify administration and allow our municipal partners to more effectively manage their services to meet the true needs of their communities. Safe, affordable housing provides

dignity to people and can give them a foundation from which they can get jobs, raise families and build strong communities.

During our consultations, we heard that much work is needed to make the system effective and workable. For example, today there are over 20 provincial housing and homeless programs operating independently, each with their own set of rules and restrictions. Our strategy will consolidate this patchwork of programs, making them easier for people to understand and access. To do that, we need to rebuild the system from the ground up and ensure the new foundation accommodates opportunities for future growth.

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The long-term affordable housing strategy has four pillars. The first pillar will be to put people first. It would reform the rules of rent-geared-to-income assistance and reduce barriers that prevent people from working towards a better future. Secondly, the strategy will also build stronger partnerships with municipalities by improving client services and simplifying a very complex system. Third, it will support affordable housing options. For example, our legislation proposes to amend the Planning Act to require municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments. Finally, the strategy will establish greater accountability by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the province and its municipal partners.

This bill is the latest step in the McGuinty government's ongoing commitment to affordable housing. In 2005, we began the largest affordable housing program in Canadian history, a \$734-million partnership with municipalities and the federal government. Last year, we extended that initiative by signing a new agreement with the federal government to deliver a range of new housing to Ontarians. This latest agreement has a combined investment of \$1.2 billion in new funding for affordable housing.

The long-term affordable housing strategy and the proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act would work hand in hand to build on those investments. The legislation would help us build some much-needed flexibility and efficiency into the housing system and help our municipal partners put these resources to work where they are most needed in their communities.

This was the product of a year-long consultation. I would like to thank my parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield, for the incredible work she did on that. I urge all members to support this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus today on the introduction of the Housing Services Act, 2010, which resulted from the long-term affordable housing strategy.

I would begin by saying that the introduction of this bill has been a long time coming. Ontarians, especially those in affordable housing or those on the lengthy

affordable housing waiting list and industry professionals, have been waiting for the long-term affordable housing strategy since the commitment was made in 2007.

The reality is that after months of consultations, more than 1,000 detailed submissions and three years' time to release this report, there is as much in this report as is still missing. The government certainly hasn't provided a long-term plan for affordable housing; they have put up a few walls, but this is far from being complete. There is very little in the new strategy. The majority of it talks about new efforts to coordinate different programs while simplifying others. There appear to be few positives in this piece of legislation.

The legislation sets out to give service managers more flexibility, and I must say that is encouraging; it looks like this government has actually taken a small step back and recognized that one size doesn't fit all. This legislation indicates that they will be giving service managers the ability to make some decisions that locally affect them. The government is going to simplify the rent-geared-to-income calculations, which I think all can agree is an important benefit for tenants. The current system does create barriers and disincentives to work because tenants must declare every time their income changes, and if it has increased, this often results in rent increases, so the additional income actually acts as a deterrent.

Having said that, this piece of legislation and the coinciding report will not reduce the enormity of the current affordable housing waiting list, which is currently well over 141,000 people. That's a 9.6% increase just from last year alone. So this continues to be a real concern without any solution.

Additionally, simplifying the rent-geared-to-income calculation process is one thing, but that still leaves many Ontarians with no hope of assistance. Many stakeholders support the idea of an Ontario housing benefit. Today's long-term affordable housing plan states, "Current financial challenges do not allow us to proceed to implement such a program at this time." Well, three years ago this government introduced a housing-related income program. It was their rental opportunities for Ontario families program, otherwise known as the ROOF program. They allocated \$185 million toward this program. It is widely known that this program was a failure, and in September of this year we learned that they were quietly making changes to the program because not enough people signed up due to the cumbersome eligibility criteria. Perhaps had they not misused a portion of that \$185 million, we would have seen a housing benefit in this piece of legislation and correspondingly in their long-term affordable housing plan.

I will just wrap up by saying that creating stronger partnerships and greater accountability between municipalities and the province, as this legislation sets out to do, is one thing, but providing Ontarians with a foolproof plan as to what affordable housing in Ontario will look like over the next 10 years is quite another. Sadly, this

piece of legislation is an opportunity missed to achieve that goal. Certainly, after waiting this long and after the extensive consultation process, our anticipation was that this report would have been far more complete.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, four housing ministers and three years later, this is what we get. It's an incredibly sad, shameful day for those 141,000 families waiting on affordable housing lists an average of 10 to 12 years, 70,000 in the GTA alone. It's a really sad and shameful day for the young mother who's paying \$1,100 in rent and getting \$1,000 on social assistance. It's a very shameful day for this government because they didn't listen during those housing consultations.

Four hundred and eighty-five local organizations and individuals making up the Housing Network of Ontario spent their valuable time telling the McGuinty government what they needed, and here's what they didn't get. No new provincial housing funding. I'll say it again: No more money. If you don't have money in a provincial housing program, you don't have provincial housing. No targets. No timelines. No accountability. No Ontario housing benefit, which you heard has been requested by food banks, by stakeholders, by housing providers; only a vague promise to explore options. No inclusionary zoning. This would have cost not one penny. No amendment to the Planning Act. This turns your back, McGuinty Liberals, on all of those municipalities that submitted requests to be able to have inclusionary zoning acts put in place in their municipalities. This turns your back on all of those municipalities: a sad, sad day for municipal government, as well as for those waiting for affordable housing.

What did they ask for? They asked for bold targets and sustained funding. They got, as I said, no new funding, no multi-year commitment, no innovative financing, no strengthening of the development of the technical capacity of the sector.

They asked for a solid measuring stick. What did they get? They got Ontario housing measures only covering families with children, with the rest of Ontarians completely left out.

What did they ask for? They asked for housing that's truly affordable and accessible. What did they get? No commitment to the Ontario housing benefit, no commitment to new funding, no affordable home ownership options.

And this is from the very stakeholders you spoke to. This is not our work.

Reform housing legislation to build stronger communities—and again, no inclusionary zoning, the very least that they could have done.

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In contrast, what does the Ontario New Democratic Party offer? These are all tabled bills: a tenants' bill of rights, rent supplements, inclusionary zoning. We even demanded of the McGuinty Liberals that they do what they promised, which was to build 20,000 new units—it requires money; no money in housing, no new units—

and, of course, all under the umbrella of housing as a human right, which this government refused to pass. Imagine that. That's shameful. That's not even in line with the United Nations on housing. The United Nations has deemed that housing is a human right; not to McGuinty Liberals. No, they wouldn't even pass that, because they know that if they did, it would have ramifications.

All of the stakeholders asked for 10,000 new units per year—all of them. Did they get one? Not one. It's a very, very sad and shameful day for those who are waiting for affordable housing. It's a very sad and shameful day for all of those who come into our MPP offices and ask where they are on the list, and we tell them, "It's only an eight- or nine-year wait now." It's a very, very sad and shameful day for families across this province who are struggling—the 250,000 families who pay more than 50% of their income on rent or housing. It's a very shameful day for all of those anti-poverty activists across this province who know that housing is the key to be able to get out of poverty.

All of this, the McGuinty Liberals turn their backs on, even those moves that would have cost nothing. They turned their backs on those as well. It's a very sad day. But they shouldn't have to wait much longer, because we look forward to October 2011, when hopefully we'll get a government in place that will actually provide housing for the people of Ontario.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm looking for my petitions here, which are always at hand. This one reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100"—I'm surprised that he's not here—"provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I'm pleased to sign and support that bill, as well as to present this to page Connor on his second-last week here.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John O'Toole: It seems that I'm getting an extraordinary amount of exposure here this afternoon. This petition here says:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister"—now Municipal Affairs Minister—"Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement

powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, even though this resolution has failed, and pass it to Justin.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS
INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: Petitions keep coming. This one reads as follows:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communication skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-list, yet

people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment" when and where they need it. We request this immediately.

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and send it to Jennifer, one of the pages on her second-last week.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are being performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens" of the north-eastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Kira to bring it to the Clerk.

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CEMETERIES

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

I sign my name and give it to page Sarah.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sault Ste. Marie.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks with page Jake.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I was waiting to see whether the person who had the floor before was here, but he is not.

I'm here to speak to this bill, and I think the financial matters contained within the bill are several and wide-ranging, but the key one has to be the 10% reduction in costs. I know that this is causing a great deal of confusion and concern in my riding—and I'm going to get to that in a moment—but it's also causing a great deal of consternation out there in the political world and in the media.

I was looking through some media stories the other day and I came across one in the Windsor Star. I think he has said it in a nutshell far better than I could in a few minutes, so I'd just like to read what Windsor Star columnist Mr. Vander Doelen had to write, and this was on November—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I hate to interrupt the member from Beaches–East York, but I would question if there is a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Quorum count, please.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A quorum is not present. There will be a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A quorum now being present, the member from Beaches–East York can continue.

Mr. Michael Prue: As I was stating, I had an opportunity to read the Windsor Star and came across an excellent column by Mr. Vander Doelen. It's dated November 20 of this year and it's entitled "Liberals in Panic Mode."

Of course I had to read this, and it ended up being all about this particular bill and the government plans to spend in excess of \$1 billion of borrowed money to give it back to ratepayers who are feeling gouged.

I'd just like to read from part of his column, the first couple of paragraphs, and then the last paragraph. He writes, I think quite correctly:

"If skyrocketing hydro bills have had you worrying about the cost of hanging all those Christmas lights this season, relax.

"Help is on the way from your children. Years from now, whether they like it or not, your kids could be paying off \$5.5 billion worth of today's electric bills that Ontario's Liberal government has decided to shift onto the provincial debt.

"In the fall fiscal update he delivered this week, Windsor's own Finance Minister Dwight Duncan told us all to quit worrying about those monster hydro bills because he's decided to shift \$1.1 billion of those costs annually onto the provincial charge card for the next five years.

"Some of us had assumed that deficit financing had started to fall out of fashion in North America, given what happened to so many big-spending politicians in recent elections.

"Not at Queen's Park, where our collective debt is now at \$212 billion and still rising fast.

"The bill-shifting scheme, which is cynically being referred to as a 'relief package' for consumers, is actually just another disguised generational wealth transfer.

"It's also an economic time bomb rigged to go off in the faces of the next generation—just like the tens of billions worth of deferred costs from the Liberals's botched nuclear program in the 1980s, which shows up on your monthly hydro bill today as 'debt retirement charges.'

"The latest hydro scheme will last past its first year only if the Liberals are re-elected next fall—which they are increasingly worried about, judging by their panicky decision-making recently."

He closes off the article—because I don't want to read the whole thing—with the final lines, "You never know: Stunts like this have worked for the Liberals in the past. But if voters decide they don't like it, the retribution they visit upon the party next fall could be worse than anyone imagines."

People out there are very unhappy about this bill, they're very unhappy with this government and they're very unhappy with hydro and the botched hydro provisions that this government has allowed to happen.

Last Thursday, in my riding of Beaches–East York, we held a hydro meeting. We advertised it widely. There was an article in the local newspaper on the day the meeting was held. People came out in goodly numbers to talk about their hydro bills, this government's hydro policies and the 10% reduction that they are all hoping to see, or dreading to see, I think was more accurate, next May.

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They came up with wonderful ideas. It's amazing how when you get a group of concerned individuals who are

chosen or who choose themselves at random to show up to a publicly advertised meeting, you're going to get the whole gamut of what the community thinks.

I promised them at the conclusion of that meeting that I would read every single idea that they brought up about how to improve our hydro policy and every single idea that they wanted to convey to this government through me, their elected representative here in the House. I'm just going to list them in the order in which they came out during that night and what people had to say.

People had to say, first, that they thought we weren't exploring all the options for energy clearly enough. They felt that, by relying on nuclear and hydroelectric for the two major sources, we weren't looking at other potential forms of energy.

One they came up with is probably not too popular, although it is being experimented with today in Ottawa. One of the people who were present wanted us to get rid of our trash by turning it into plasma energy, as is now being done in and around the city of Ottawa. That was one idea that was expressed, that if we were looking for alternate forms of energy that weren't going to cost us as much money, the plasma exercise might be a good one because the people who are getting the tip-out fees for the garbage are absorbing the remaining part of the costs and are free to sell their energy on the grid. The person who spoke about this felt that this should have been explored more fully by the Liberal government.

Another person stood up and talked about biomass and how she was a little upset that the whole biomass alternative is not anywhere on the radar, at less than 1%, and that surely when there are waste forest products and waste agricultural products and the government is shutting down the coal-fired generation plants in Lambton, in Mississauga and in Atikokan, we should be looking more to biomass as a way of producing electricity. It was pointed out that biomass is carbon neutral, and that it was a good thing to do—

Mr. Bill Mauro: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'd like to correct the record for the member, that in fact the Atikokan plant isn't being closed, but is in fact being converted to biomass.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That is not a point of order. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Prue: If you had been patient, you would have heard me say that in my explanation. I am not saying what I think; I am saying what the members of my riding came forward to say. I did inform that member, and I'm going to do it now on the record, that the Atikokan plant is indeed changing to biomass, but there were some suggestions that in agricultural areas we could switch to switchgrass and waste agricultural, and that is not being done at the moment.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It is so.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is so? Well, when it's your turn, go ahead.

The next person who stood up was complaining quite bitterly about the loss of industry in Ontario. He felt that the loss of industry was directly related to the cost of

industrial hydro going up and that we were no longer competitive in the province of Ontario with our hydro rates. He pointed out, quite correctly, I think, that both Manitoba and Quebec have lower hydro rates and that their decline in industrial usage is far, far less severe than our own. That person wanted to make sure there was an industrial hydro rate.

The next person who stood up talked about the cost of solar energy and was bemoaning the fact that, in Ontario, we are paying up to 80 cents a kilowatt hour for solar energy. Although I think everyone in the room agreed that it was a clean form of energy, the majority of them wondered how we could continue to afford to pay 80 cents for solar energy when it costs only a very small fraction to produce energy through other, more traditional means.

There were a number of people who were upset about nuclear energy, the cost and the waste. They felt that nuclear energy was not the answer. They pointed out the fiasco of the 1980s, when all of these plants were built, and the fact that today it is the children of those people who are now having to pay for nuclear energy down the road.

They talked about the waste from nuclear energy as well. A number of deputants talked about the waste and how there is no long-term plan in this country, in this province or indeed anywhere in the world on how to deal with nuclear waste. It is again a problem that we are going to create and visit upon our children and our children's children for generations to come so that we can have some form that is perhaps cheaper, but going to leave them with the long-term consequences.

People, to a person, talked about the cost of electricity in Ontario; that they are struggling, they are trying to make ends meet, they are every day wondering whether the hydro bill is going to tip them over the edge where they're going to either lose their accommodation or they're not going to be able to do things that their family relies upon; whether there's going to be enough food, and that the hydro bills are becoming excessive. Person after person talked about that. One woman even suggested that she may move back to Manitoba. She came to Ontario a few years ago, to Toronto particularly and specifically, but she may move back to Manitoba because it was her view that the electricity rates there were affordable and here they are not.

There were people who stood up and talked about solar panels, and people generally thought that solar panels were a good idea but they felt that getting the electricity from those panels into a large grid system was counterproductive in terms of cost. One gentleman in particular felt that solar panels should not be put into the grid system but should be used in the individual house on which they are built as a form of direct electricity so that there is no cost or loss of electricity by sending it over the wires, which one of the panellists who works for the society of electrical engineers said could be as high as 9% or 10%. Although there was support for solar panels, there was only support if it remained localized.

There were many discussions about why we are in such a panic to build additional nuclear facilities or other facilities when the actual demand for electricity in Ontario has declined and continues to decline year after year after year. It is highly unlikely, given until 2015, that we will be using as much electricity as we used in the early years of this millennium. People wondered, given that many appliances and many lights are burning far less electricity, that —

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would you stop for a minute? I would just ask that people, if they want to have conversations—the general level of volume here is getting to the point that it's difficult to hear the member speaking—take them out to the lounges. Thank you.

Member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your intervention there. I was having a hard time hearing myself speak, as well.

They talked about the demand declining and wondered why there was a rush at this particular point, that surely there should be more sane and sensible thought put into an \$85-billion energy plan that is not going to have costs that are going to be borne in decades to come and that people not yet born will have to pay for.

There was quite a discussion around Bruce nuclear. Some people thought the deal that the government had made was a good deal because the refurbishment is not going to cost the taxpayers any money, but they were quickly reminded by other people in the audience that it wasn't so good a deal when the Ontario government is subsidizing the Bruce plant and Bruce nuclear to the tune of some \$60 million a year for not producing electricity at all. When that fact came out on the floor, there was some general gasping.

People talked about other places having better policies in terms of heating. One of the discussions was around Europe and geothermal units and that in Ontario we are lagging far behind other jurisdictions in terms of geothermal heating of homes, offices, schools and institutions.

There was universal panning of the HST. Whenever the topic of the HST came up, people were upset about it. They were upset about the HST in general but particularly as it affected them in their usage of power, whether that power be in their automobile in the form of gasoline or home heating oil or electricity. In fact, one of the sharpest criticisms of the HST of all came in the terms of hydro bills and hydroelectricity itself.

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Everyone wondered, and I have wondered, and I have written to ministers and I have asked this question repeatedly, and perhaps someone can inform this House: Why does the government think it is fair to charge HST on the debt retirement? This was an absolutely—one person stood up and asked this question: Why should they pay HST, 13%, on the debt retirement charges that the government has meted out to them? They agree that somebody has to pay the debt, that it was the foolishness of

past governments, particularly the Liberal governments in the 1980s, spending all of that money on nuclear development and racking up huge costs, but where does the government get off charging HST on the debt? One person even wondered whether or not it was legal. I have to agree. I don't know whether you can charge HST on a debt and think that it's legal. Perhaps some government member, in the two-minute comment or later today, can advise where the government thinks that this is a just and perhaps legal thing to do, to put HST on a debt retirement.

People stood up and talked about privatization of hydro and how it has not worked. They blame the past Conservative government for attempting to do this, but they also said that it has, in turn, led to petty corruption within the hydro departments. They talked at some great length about that.

People, as I said, were opposed to the HST. One woman who stood up was quite a conservationist and felt that the government ought not to tinker with the peak periods. We heard the government last week announce that they're taking two hours off the peak period starting this summertime. She felt that that would be allowing people to waste more electricity in times that we could not afford it.

A gentleman stood up and talked about his wife in terms of the concern that he has at the cost of electricity going up and the fact that he cannot shave his electricity at any given time of the day because of the medical needs of his wife. She is on a respirator at home. The electricity constantly has to be on in order to allow her to breathe. He felt that this was an unfair policy. He couldn't simply turn it on and off when the electricity was cheap. It had to be on 24 hours a day or he might find that his wife would die. He didn't know what to do. He absolutely did not know what to do.

At the end of the day, everybody agreed that the energy policy is in a mess. Everybody in the room agreed that the 10% reduction that has been announced by this government is not going to work. Everybody in the room understood that the government, after one year—just as Mr. Vander Doelen has said, if they don't win the next election, this can be easily cancelled.

The consensus was that a couple of things have to happen. The first one was that the HST should be removed from hydro because it will be far more difficult for subsequent governments to reinstitute or reinstate that. The second thing was that the government should step back and take a long and far more sober look at wanting to build new nuclear and other facilities to produce electricity. Because the consensus in the room was that we have sufficient electricity now and we are more than likely going to have sufficient electricity for most of the next decade, and that in the interim, there is a possibility, and some thought even a probability, that science would develop new and better ways of producing electricity that would not be so expensive. People talked about liking windmills, although they found the 14 and 19 cents per kilowatt hour a little bit high. They were

confident that over time these costs may come down. They thought that the government ought not to be in a wholesale rush to do that. They also suggested that I bring up the Samsung deal, which most did not think would create any jobs in Ontario.

All in all, it was a very entertaining night for a politician, to go out there and have a town hall meeting and listen to ordinary people who had many wonderful ideas on electricity, on electricity usage, and to bring back to this government the final analysis of the people of Beaches–East York who attended that meeting—and the room was pretty full—that there is no consensus in support of this bill or the government reducing electricity by 10—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Beaches–East York, who has brought forward his comments as being those that are reflective of his constituents, so in some ways, I suppose I'm responding not directly to his comments, but to those of his constituents.

The one I would make a point of spending a little bit of time on is the comment that—I will say not so much this particular member, but other members, especially the member from Kenora–Rainy River in the NDP, often raise the issue of the Quebec–Manitoba industrial hydro rates, or just rates in general relative to those of Ontario. Usually, when they're discussed by the member from Kenora–Rainy River, they are discussed in the context of the forest industry, somehow trying to link the problems with the forest industry to this particular piece. I would say it's a bit of a disingenuous argument to make. It's very much an apples-and-oranges comparison when you compare what goes on in those provinces to Ontario. Yes, Quebec and Manitoba's rates are lower. They always have been. Quebec and Manitoba are very fortunate. The economies are different, they're topographically blessed, where very much if not most of their power is hydraulic and long since paid for.

What I would remind the members' constituents, though, when you link it back to the economy, is that in Ontario, through policies and programs brought in by our government, large industrials now in the province of Ontario find themselves in a very competitive position when it comes to hydro rates. It is not difficult at all for any of us on this side of the House to bring forward testimonials from many large industrials in fact supporting very much the hydro programs that are in place, and there will be many of those stories coming forward.

At some point, I would say to the members' constituents, there comes a time when you have to choose. I think the NDP as a party generally is not supportive of nuclear. Some 50% of our current supply comes from nuclear, and if you're not supportive of that, then I think you're going to have to explain to the people in the province of Ontario how you are going to replace 50% of the energy requirements that you have. If it's the same with wind and solar—which seems to be supported, but people are a

bit reluctant on the costs—biomass costs as well; I think they said they were supportive of biomass but afraid of the costs.

Ultimately, you have to choose. They're not easy choices. We're moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Beaches–East York has offered a thoughtful critique of the government's energy policy and Bill 135 in particular. I think that the government members perhaps need to be reminded that they are, in fact, in government, and the opposition parties have an obligation, a role and a responsibility—in fact, a constitutional responsibility—to point out the flaws and the drawbacks of the government's policy. During the course of the debate, the people of the province and those who are listening have an opportunity to assess the relative merits of the arguments that are being put forward by the government, as well as the opposition parties. I think that has to be pointed out.

Certainly, I'm looking forward to the continuing debate on Bill 135, and I know that our member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is teed up to offer our party's perspective on this. Of course, as our energy critic, he has a lot to say on this, and has in the past. But we know that the hydro issue continues to be a significant one in our communities across the province. Certainly, in my riding, I continue to hear from constituents who are afraid to open their hydro bill. In many cases, they are changing their patterns of consumption because they're fearful of the changes that will be forthcoming. I just received, as a customer of Hydro One, my notice in the mail that time-of-use pricing will affect my neighbours and me starting December 28.

I think the government has a great obligation to continue to try to explain its hydro policies, but the fact is, people are not buying it. I think that in all likelihood, over the next number of months, we're going to see a continued diminishment or drop in the popular support for the government over the hydro issue. I think that their policies are by and large not meeting the needs of the people of Ontario, and the price of hydro for industry in particular has been one of the key reasons why we've lost many hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs over the course of the past couple of years. I think that all of these factors need to be taken into consideration.

Again, I want to thank the member for Beaches–East York for his presentation this afternoon.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Beaches–East York. I listened carefully, and I appreciated his comments from his constituents. We are the voice of our constituents, and it's important to bring that forward.

He spoke a lot about energy policy, and I did want to bring some other voices forward. In any debate or discussion, it's healthy to hear both sides. That's what we

teach our students in school: to have an open mind and listen to both sides. I thought I would just share a couple of other comments on the McGuinty government and Bill 135 and the long-term energy plan.

The Society of Energy Professionals say, "We're ecstatic. [Ontario's long-term energy plan] is going to bring an awful lot of new jobs to the province."

The chair of the Green Energy Act Alliance says, "I think the plan is fantastic. This government has decided to phase out coal and replace it with renewable energy—and we are a world leader because of that."

SkyPower Ltd. had this to say: "This is a great day for the people of Ontario on the announcement of the long-term energy plan, a clear and concrete plan that reinforces the McGuinty government's commitment to clean energy ... Today I am truly proud to be an Ontarian."

So I think it's important to look at all sides and also remember that Bill 135 talks a lot about the Ontario clean energy benefit and the Securities Act, which we're going to hear more about from my colleague from Mississauga South. It goes on to talk about the Teranet agreement. It's called managing responsibly, and we need to hear more about that too.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters.

I listened to the member for Beaches–East York and his wise counsel to the government. Unfortunately, I really don't think they have it in mind to listen to him or anyone else on the opposition benches in regard to this matter.

Expert economists have judged Dalton McGuinty to be the worst fiscal manager among all of the other Premiers in this country, and possibly we might even extend that to North America and deal with some of the state governors, because this province has failed so badly over the tenure of this government. We are now, in North America, among states and provinces, about 10th, well below the median GDP of the provinces and states. We are behind such states as Virginia, which traditionally was one of the poorer states in the union. We're behind Illinois, which we read about daily. Part of the rustbucket area is Michigan, and yet we are well behind Michigan in GDP, as a province.

Unfortunately, we're on the wrong road, and this bill is just another step to the ruin of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Wellington–Halton Hills, Kitchener–Conestoga and Cambridge for their thoughtful comments.

Just to reply to some of those, I agree with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan that there are difficult choices to be made. The members of my constituency

who came out, packed the little church hall and had their say understood that there are difficult choices, but then they reiterated again and again: They don't like the HST. They resent paying HST on their hydro. They feel that if we do have to make those difficult choices, we should do it sanely and soberly and take our time; that there is not the rush that appears in this bill or in this government to be making those choices down the road when it is not likely that we are going to find ourselves in a deficit position in terms of hydroelectricity for a number of years. It was pointed out that the number of megawatt hours that are being produced far exceeds the number actually being used at this time.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has reiterated one of the very real concerns, and although Toronto has not been affected in the same ways as other parts of the province, the job loss has been horrendous. People who lose their jobs in smaller town Ontario usually lose them in a place where there are no jobs to replace them.

For the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, my entire speech today was to reflect what my constituents had told me. I agree with some of the points they made and disagree with some others, but that's my own personal view. I did promise them that their views would get a full airing here today, and I hope to get a copy of the transcript and send it out to each and every member of Beaches–East York who attended, so they know that they are being listened to, at least by this MPP.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: It's a pleasure to rise to debate Bill 135. The bill builds upon our Open Ontario plan to create jobs and foster economic growth. The focus of our Open Ontario plan is about strengthening Ontario's economy and helping Ontarians make it through tough times. Our plan includes tax reforms to lay the foundation for investment and economic growth, investments to stimulate the economy and create jobs; and it includes plans to develop the North. There's more training for those who have lost a job. It provides working families with pocket-book relief and help with the household budget. It's about rebuilding and strengthening our hospitals, schools, universities and colleges; it's about implementing full-day kindergarten so that all our children get a good foundation early and helping working families with child care costs.

Some people may forget just how far Ontario has come in the last seven years. When we came to government in 2003, we inherited not only a fiscal deficit, but health, education and infrastructure deficits. The Tories waged a long battle against our teachers and our schools at great costs to Ontario families. Our children lost over 26 million learning days to strikes. Only 68% of our high school students were graduating, compared to 79% today. Just over half of our elementary students were meeting provincial standards, compared with almost 70% today.

By 2003, after eight years of cuts, the health system was at a breaking point. The Tories closed 28 hospitals,

cut 7,000 hospital beds and fired over 6,200 nurses. The cost for Ontario families was huge. Patients were waiting for years for certain surgeries, a rapidly increasing population of orphaned patients were unable to find a family doctor, and those that were fragile went to overcrowded emergency rooms that closed their doors to ambulances when volumes spiked. They recklessly cut funding to municipalities and fired meat inspectors and water inspectors.

The impact of these decisions on communities across the province was profound. The Tories fought with workers. Public services got worse. In 2003, new parents waited an average of 20 weeks to get birth certificates for their baby, a process that today takes less than 15 days. Their outdated, broken tax system resulted in unnecessary red tape and duplication for businesses. Contrary to the image they portray, the Tories had among the highest tax rates on new business investment in North America, making it difficult to attract investment and position Ontario's economy competitively to weather the challenges we're facing today, but also to perform well in an increasingly competitive global economy.

In 2003, our government inherited an electricity system that was neglected and mismanaged. This left Ontario vulnerable to brownouts and, eventually, the largest electricity blackout in Ontario's history. They even increased the output from dirty, coal-fired power plants. This meant that more and more children grew up with chronic asthma and health issues.

In the wake of their fighting and their gutting of public services, when they were done, they left Ontarians saddled with a hidden \$5.6-billion deficit.

None of this was our legacy, but these problems became our responsibility, so we spent our first mandate rebuilding public services with landmark investments in schools, universities, hospitals and infrastructure. We're reforming our tax system to create a more competitive economic climate. We're phasing coal out of our energy supply mix and building a long-term, clean, safe and reliable energy supply.

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We transformed our welfare programs to help people get back into the workplace. We set targets to reduce child poverty. We made substantial progress on our core public targets in health, in education and in reducing pollution.

Our high school graduations are going up; our hospital wait times are going down. A record number of students are attending college and university, placing our post-secondary education level among the highest in the western world. Our infrastructure and transit investments are the largest in the history of this province.

Now, despite being left with a substantial deficit by the last government, our government did balance the budget in consecutive years. Then we started our second mandate confronting the biggest recession since the Great Depression and, yes, we made a decision to build on our progress. So we've continued to focus on the public services that matter most to Ontarians: our schools and

our hospitals. We're continuing to take steps to position Ontario better to meet our economic challenges and strengthen our economy so we can position ourselves competitively in the 21st century.

This is the context that shapes our economic planning going forward.

Although Ontario's economy is emerging from the global recession, Ontario families are still feeling pinched financially. Many are anxious and uncertain about their ability to make ends meet. While our government's measures have led to improvements in the economy and have helped to secure Ontario's future over the longer term, families and businesses are struggling right now with higher costs. They need some help today. Again, the government is taking action to help Ontario families and businesses who are feeling the pinch, especially with increasing electricity prices.

As members know, Ontario is emerging from the global recession. It's the worst in a generation. It hit Ontario particularly hard because our export economy is dependent upon the US, and the US is suffering a dramatic decline. This is exemplified by the automotive sector. It's a key sector, and most of those car exports are to the United States. It was felt immediately during the downturn. Now, given our initiatives, key indicators have improved from the lows during the recession. But Ontario families and businesses are still feeling its effects.

Seventy-five per cent of jobs lost during the recession have been recovered, compared to 10% in the US. Since May 2009, the Ontario economy has created 186,100 net new jobs. Creating jobs is a key priority of our Open Ontario plan. Independent reports estimate that Ontario's bold economic reforms will create nearly 600,000 new jobs within 10 years. We're also reducing the deficit and the debt. We have a \$2-billion decline in Ontario's total funding requirement for 2010-11. This is due to a \$1-billion decline in the projected deficit and a \$1-billion payment to the province from the proposed Teranet agreement. The projected deficit for 2010-11 is now \$18.7 billion, 25% lower than the deficit projected just a year ago.

Nevertheless, members of the opposition would have you believe that Ontario's economy is not growing or creating jobs. As I've mentioned, this is not the case. We've invested \$28 billion in short-term infrastructure stimulus. Our support for the auto sector, directly and indirectly, supported about 400,000 jobs across the province and helped save Ontario's auto industry. We also enacted the Green Energy and Green Economy Act in 2009, which will help to create 50,000 jobs.

The key economic indicators have indeed improved since the recession. We take our responsibility to manage the province's finances seriously. For example, compensation restraint in the Ontario public service and broader public sector would help redirect about \$2 billion towards sustaining public services over two years. And remember, we have reduced the price of most generic drugs listed under the Ontario public drug program by 50%. Conservatives did not support it. Instead, they

chose to side with Big Pharma against taxpayers and patients. The ongoing comprehensive review announced in the 2010 budget has so far identified over \$260 million in potential savings.

And so it is that our government eliminated the \$5.5-billion deficit inherited from the Tories ahead of schedule and posted three consecutive balanced budgets. By continuing our prudent approach to fiscal management, we are on track for a deficit of \$18.7 billion in 2010-11, which is almost 25% lower, as I mentioned, than the projected \$24.7 billion. We're also borrowing \$2 billion less than forecast in the 2010 budget and we're reducing those borrowing needs, which will lower interest costs and which creates even more fiscal flexibility. And we have reduced government administrative costs from 15% to 12% of overall spending. That's the second-best efficiency rate in Canada.

Since 2007, we have achieved more than \$800 million in savings per year through streamlined processes, through lowering of administrative costs, through better use of technology and other cost-avoidance and cost-reduction measures.

We're on track to reduce the size of the Ontario public service by 5%, including savings of \$440 million over the next five years by harmonizing the collection of sales tax and corporate tax with the federal government. The measures we've introduced to restrain compensation in the OPS and the broader public sector would help redirect the \$2 billion toward sustaining public services over two years.

Our record of sound fiscal management stands in stark contrast to that of the previous government. They added billions of dollars to Ontario's debt, they hid the deficit from Ontarians in the 2003 budget, and under the PCs Ontario had the highest-ever accumulated-deficit-to-GDP ratio. They followed and still continue to promote a slash-and-burn approach to Ontario schools and hospitals. Let's recall that the Tories spent \$662 million on consultants in their last full year of office.

We, on the other hand, have a realistic and responsible plan to cut the deficit in half within five years of its highest peak and eliminate it in eight years. A comprehensive review of all our government programs and services has identified, so far, more than \$260 million in potential savings and reduced consulting expenditures by over 50% since 2003.

Let's address Teranet. Our government is committed to maximizing the value of government-owned assets while protecting consumers. Our proposed agreement with Teranet Inc. would retain provincial oversight of the electronic land registration system, including its fees. Under the agreement, Borealis would provide the province with an upfront payment of \$1 billion, which would be used to reduce the provincial debt. This helps reduce borrowing needs, again lowers interest costs and helps create more fiscal room. Beginning in 2017, the province would also receive an annual royalty payment from Teranet, which is expected to be approximately \$50 million in 2017-18 and to grow further in future years.

Unlike the Tories' Highway 407 sale, our proposed agreement with Teranet contains significant consumer protection, including provincial control over any increases to the fees charged by Teranet for statutory services. It also would ensure the province has ongoing participation in Teranet through, as I just mentioned, royalties and the potential to share in any extraordinary profits realized by Teranet through a sale or in the pickup of its performance. All in all, the province will continue its oversight of the electronic land registration system.

The proposed agreement negotiated by our government freezes fees for five years, and that's good news for Ontario consumers. This highlights a difference between how we in the government manage public assets and how the Conservatives did when they were in power. The PC government's fire sale of Highway 407 left the province with no approval rights with respect to fee increases. Ontario receives no ongoing revenues from Highway 407. The PC government failed to negotiate any participation rights in this agreement. This again follows their slash-and-burn approach. In contrast to their hollow talk and rhetoric, they offer no plan.

We're also taking leadership when it comes to securities regulation. Our government is proposing amendments to the Ontario Securities Act that would allow the Ontario Securities Commission to develop and implement a robust regulatory framework for the over-the-counter derivatives. These amendments would allow for new rules specifically designed for OTC derivatives. The OSC will undertake significant consultations in developing the proposed new OTC derivatives rules.

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In updating financial regulation, our government is being consistent with the proposed federal Canadian Securities Act and assisting in a seamless transition to the new Canadian securities regulator. Additional proposed amendments to the Ontario Securities Act would also provide for regulatory oversight of credit rating agencies and strengthen the oversight of alternative trading systems.

Bill 135 would enable the province to move ahead with plans to modernize financial regulations by strengthening regulatory requirements and adopting flexible and effective global regulatory measures. These plans would not only help protect consumers and investors, but would also help promote Ontario's growing stature as a well-regulated, world-class financial services market. It gives Ontario and Canada a competitive advantage against the world. This would be a move in the right direction as we look to the future of Ontario's role within Canada and on the world stage.

While I've spoken a lot about the opposition's record and lack of ideas, I'm equally concerned about the third party's approach. I know my colleagues in the NDP are suspicious of our financial system. They never miss an opportunity to besmirch the financial sector and the people it employs. I would remind them that our financial sector employs over 200,000 people and is the second-highest contributor to Ontario's GDP.

Toronto is an important global financial centre, and yet there are members there who accuse them of being loan sharks. Even worse, they attack the financial sector's workers simply for having those jobs and providing for their families. I wonder how many of their constituents actually work in the sector, how many of their constituents work day in and day out helping seniors to plan for retirement or workers to manage their pensions. Those workers and seniors depend on our financial system and, as such, also depend on our government to regulate it appropriately and effectively. I hope we can count on the support of the NDP as we move forward on these reforms.

We all know that many Ontarians are still struggling as we emerge from this recession, and the price of energy is a top concern; it's at the forefront. That's why I'm proud that our government continues to take steps to help Ontarians manage their energy bills. The government has a responsibility to make sure that electricity is there when we need it. We need a stable grid so that when we flick on the switch, the lights come on. Stable grids don't happen on their own; they require planning and investment. For decades, government after government in this province ignored this responsibility. No new generation was added, transmission infrastructure was left to crumble, and the use of dirty coal increased.

That's why we are investing in Ontario's electricity system now. We're eliminating dirty coal—that's like taking seven million cars off the road—we're upgrading 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines, and we've brought 8,000 megawatts of new energy supply online. We're moving to time-of-use pricing that more accurately reflects the real costs of energy.

It's true that these initiatives, while creating an estimated 50,000 new jobs, have a cost. As such, the government has also taken steps to help Ontarians, especially seniors, to manage those costs. We've cut income taxes on the lowest income tax bracket; we doubled the seniors' home property tax credit; we've expanded the Ontario energy and property tax credit for seniors; and we introduced a new sales tax credit.

Now, through this bill, we've also proposed the Ontario clean energy benefit, which, if passed, will cut hydro bills by 10%. The estimated full-year cost of the proposed OCEB is \$1.1 billion next year, and it's made possible by our fiscal management, which, as you will recall, has meant that our deficit is a billion dollars lower than was initially predicted.

We have to invest in our electricity system. It's been put off too long and it can't wait. We will continue to take this responsibility seriously, while also providing for support to Ontario families and seniors.

Members opposite repeatedly rise in their place to comment on our energy plan. They want us to stop investing in green energy, which supports green jobs, supports small business, supports municipalities and supports Ontario farmers. They want us to freeze rates, which under previous governments led to a massive unfunded debt that Ontario ratepayers are still paying for,

and this with artificial pricing. And they want us to stop investing in modern infrastructure.

This is after the previous government's neglect of our energy grid. It led to blackouts, brownouts, increased reliance on coal and made Ontario a net importer of energy dependent on our neighbours. All the while, they have no plan of their own to offer Ontarians. Their poor record and their lack of plan speak for themselves. We will continue to make Ontario's electricity system green, modern and self-reliant while taking steps to protect consumers.

Our government is committed to creating jobs, boosting long-term economic growth and protecting the progress Ontarians have made in their schools and hospitals. We have a prudent and responsible plan to reduce borrowing, cut spending and eliminate the deficit that is caused by the global recession. This bill is about creating jobs, supporting those in need, protecting our environment and stimulating economic growth. It's about making responsible decisions for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Just before questions and comments, I want to acknowledge that we have Larry O'Connor, who is the mayor of the township of Brock and former MPP for the riding of Durham–York, here. Welcome.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened intently to the member from Mississauga South. I like the member for Mississauga South. He's a gentleman, for sure. Unfortunately, I have a great fear that he has been subject to the Liberal caucus brainwashing program that has been in effect ever since 2003. He would have only been subject to the treatments since 2007. Boy, it's really rich; when he talks about hollow talk of others, my goodness, the hollow talk and rhetoric that was in that speech and that we're getting from this Liberal government all the time. Who else but a Liberal would be standing up and rejoicing that the deficit is \$18.7 billion? That's the new projected deficit, and they're taking all kinds of credit that the number is lower than originally estimated.

The change in the deficit—almost all of it—is due to the fact that General Motors was able to repay their debts to the government. It has nothing to do with good management. These guys talk about good management. They talk about reducing an \$18.7-billion deficit and they're talking about the work they've done to reduce costs and cut costs in the operation of government. The cost of government has gone up so dramatically. We're looking at \$126 billion in expenditures in this government. When they came to office, it was \$68 billion. In seven short years, this is where they've taken us. You know, when money was coming in it was okay, when the economy was in good shape it was okay, but when recessions start to hit, governments have to understand they're not doing the job—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I really feel sorry for the member from Mississauga when he has to stand up in the House

and be charged with the indefensible Liberal platform, because I don't really think that in his heart he believes what he's saying. If he wanted to do something—they stand up here day after day and say, "Well, what's your platform? What did you want to do?"

I'd like to remind the government of some of the things that the NDP wanted to do in the last three years which they shot down. How about the 10% manufacturing tax credit to attract business to Ontario? Shot down. How about the 50% Canadian content in all manufacturing to create jobs and security? Shot down. How about the Buy Ontario bill? Shot down. After promising no tax increases—Mr. McGuinty himself stood in this House and said "no tax increases"—we got a nice big health tax increase; we got an eco tax which they screwed up and had to withdraw; we got the HST. It goes on and on and on.

One particular bill that really interests me—they tout how they care about the people who don't have anything to eat. I think it was the official opposition that brought a bill forward that said something about "We'll give the farmers a tax credit for any excess produce or material that they could donate to the food banks." Whoops, shot down by the Liberals. My goodness, you really care about the poor.

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I'm telling you, I sit in here day after day and listen to this scrambling, trying to save their hides, because an election is coming.

The 10% on that hydro bill: People aren't falling for that one, because you're going to raise it 46% in the next five years; so, gee, they're only down another 36%. That's a good incentive.

I'm telling you, it gets worse and worse, and I don't believe the people of Ontario are going to buy it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Mississauga South is a highly respected and regarded person and perhaps would have been best to stick with banking. Our member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke politely reprimanded him for reading the trashy Liberal notes that he was supplied—and I mean that quite respectfully. I thought most of the stuff he said was inaccurate, and he should probably withdraw it all. I mean that.

Really, if you look at what they've done in the last seven years, a good predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. The past behaviour is that they promised not to increase taxes. They promised to close the coal plants. They promised to improve all these things. Let's look at the results, and that's all you have to do. First of all, they have not closed one coal plant. They promised it three times. They still haven't closed one, and they're still not going to close them all. The next thing is, they actually promised not to raise taxes. They raised them twice, the largest tax increases in the history of Ontario: the health tax and the HST. Let's look at the finances. Right now, we're in an economic collapse by any measure.

In fact, I just finished a meeting today—from a group that they assembled, a group of experts, a task force on

competitiveness, productivity and economic progress. It places Ontario dead last. This isn't our leader, Tim Hudak, saying it; these are the experts. I've got the report. By any measure, they have failed.

Not to blame the member from Mississauga South—and he can talk about hospitals closed and all the various things, but they haven't really told the complete story. Many of those hospitals were re-amalgamated.

What's the biggest issue in Ontario today? Health care is in the hole; long-term care is in the hole.

This government has failed on every single measure, and I ask—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in this debate and to comment on the eloquent comments made by my colleague from Mississauga South. I thought that he covered a lot of material in the time that he spoke. It's certainly worth complimenting him on some of the highlights of the more important things he said that I think really are worth reiterating.

Interjections.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Clearly, the member from the Progressive Conservative Party doesn't want to hear it, but I am more than happy to reiterate some of the great comments made by the member from Mississauga South.

Bill 135 is called the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act. There's so much stuff in this act that I highly encourage the members to go through it if they haven't already.

One of the highlights that we heard from the member from Mississauga South was the Ontario clean energy benefit. Just to reiterate, we're talking about \$150 a year per household, about \$1,700 per year for businesses, and up to \$2,000 a year for farmers. These are significant savings for the people of Ontario.

We heard about the Securities Act and the Ontario Securities Commission. We're looking at a regulatory framework and oversight of credit rating agencies—again, more oversight, more accountability and, as the act says, managing responsibly.

We heard the member talk about a projected deficit in 2010 that has been cut by almost 25%. These are significant numbers and comments that he has made. He talked about reducing the borrowing needs. He gave us a beautiful, eloquent overview of Teranet and retaining provincial oversight of this electronic land registration, and the accountability that we haven't seen in previous governments.

It's time for this act and this government, as we take responsibility.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Mississauga South has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, the member for Durham and the member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

To the members' points: Decorum in this House and healthy debate are important. I respect all members' views regardless of political stripe. Never I do believe any of us mean any ill intent or insult. It's important that we have this healthy debate, but it's also important for them to respect my point of view. At times, we in this House believe that some tough decisions, especially in these tough economic times, have to be made now.

I remind the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that the deficit that he spoke of occurred during the best times of growth in our province. It was in good times that they did what they did. We're making those tough decisions in rough, recessionary times. It is now that we need leadership and transparency in ensuring that Ontarians are protected going forward.

The member from Durham rightly puts it: Measure the government based on their past behaviour. It's an indication of their future behaviour. That was the purpose of my preface: recognizing and remembering how it was before we got ourselves into trouble and the leadership we've taken in this government to ensure that we're protected going forward.

So I say to all members here to continue with the debate and support this bill.

To the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: We look to you to support us yet again. We don't want to support a tax-and-spend policy, nor do we want a slash-and-burn. We need to take a balanced approach and we look forward to your support.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 135 today. I heard the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. It is rich in itself that the Liberal government is calling this bill the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, that's right. That is funny, isn't it?

On the bill it says, "An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters," but the Liberals have dubbed it the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act. It is just a manifestation of where this government has gotten. It's all about messaging and spin, and when the messaging and the spin aren't working, they change to other messaging and other spin, but it is still the mantra of this government; everything is about the message and the spin.

It is never about what Ontario families need. It is never about the facts. It is never about the real situation and the real trials and tribulations of real Ontario families. It is about message and spin. And this new act is just another example of exactly that. It is a response to the fact that they have messed up the Ontario electricity system so badly. But the act itself—and this is the challenge that members in the opposition have sometimes.

The fall economic statement was laughable in itself. Minister Duncan rose in this House and the key point, the cornerstone of the fall economic statement, of which I

have a copy of here—unfortunately in French, which is not going to do me a whole lot of good as far as reading anything from it. But you know what, it wouldn't matter—my interpreter here, Monsieur Bisson from Timmins–James Bay—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Need help?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I'm okay. It doesn't matter, Gilles. I appreciate the offer of help, but it wouldn't matter. Whether it was English or French or written in one of probably about 200 or more languages that are used in this world, fiction is fiction, baloney is baloney, no matter how you slice it. You can slice it, dice it, throw it in the clothes dryer, it's still going to come out baloney, and that's what we've got there.

The cornerstone piece of legislation or the message coming out of the fall economic statement was this idea that they were going to give Ontario consumers a 10% rebate, starting January 1 next year, on their hydro bills.

This coming from a government that, when Dwight Duncan was the energy minister, said, "It is absolutely wrong to subsidize the cost of electricity. Consumers must pay the real and actual cost of electricity. There can never be a situation where you take the cost of electricity away from the ratepayer and put it on the back of the taxpayer. You can't do that." That was his position, that was the government's position, when they brought out Bill 100 and created the OPA. Do you remember that virtual agency that was going to be just a teeny-weeny little thing? Well, now it's bigger than the Taj Mahal.

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Anyway, that was Dwight Duncan then, and Dwight Duncan now as the finance minister is going to give you back 10% on your hydro. People aren't fooled by that, and they're not buying it, because he didn't give you 10% on your hydro last year. He's giving you 10% on your hydro now because—oh, oh, it's not possible that he's doing that because there's an election next year.

Interjections: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. Even this government—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm concerned my good friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is becoming cynical.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): You know that's not a point of order.

Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I apologize. If it looks like I'm becoming cynical, please forgive me, because each and every day—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Fight against it, John. Fight against it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am. As much as I am a habitual optimist, who always wants to think the best and expect the best, and certainly think the very best of my political opponents, it's becoming increasingly difficult, because everything that they seem to do is motivated by a political end.

Every time any member, any minister, in that House speaks now, every time they get up to introduce a bill,

every time they go to a press conference, every time they put out a press release, there is just this—you might as well have this little circle, this cloud, just hovering over them with the date October 6, 2011: “Make sure that everything you say and everything you do is designed to fool, confuse and cajole the public into supporting us”—“us” meaning the Liberals—“in the next election.”

This little attempt to send another cheque—interestingly enough, those rebates are going to be coming on their hydro bills starting in May of next year. It’s going to take a little while to filter through, getting very close to the election, coupled with another HST payment cheque. Some people call them something—and I’m lost for a moment about what the word is, when you kind of give somebody something, hoping to get something back, and maybe it really is not the best thing to do.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s a quid pro quo.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah. There’s a word, and I’m missing it.

So at about the same time that that little cheque is coming—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It’s called a transitional rebate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, a transitional rebate—you’re going to be getting another little something on your hydro bill.

But the fact remains that this 10% that they’re getting on the hydro bill doesn’t even make up for the fact that their hydro bills have gone up about 30% just in the last year, and 75% since this government took office.

When you put that all together, it’s like—do you know what it’s like? It’s like the mugger gets you on the corner of the street and he takes your wallet. After going through it and taking all the money, he goes back, gives you a \$5 bill and expects that you’re going to thank him, and he wonders why you’re not so grateful. Well, the people in the province of Ontario are not going to be grateful when you’ve literally emptied their pockets to the point that there’s nothing left but lint, and now you’re going to give them a little wee bit back, just a little bit of a crumb to ho—hopefully satisfy them for the time being.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Ho ho hopefully? Is that your Santa alliteration?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Ho ho hopefully?

That’s only part of the problem with this bill. Do you know that they wanted to just shove this bill through here with no debate? Can you imagine that? They wanted to introduce it one day and have it in front of the House the next. It amends 21 acts. It amends 21 acts, and we get six and a half hours to debate it. How much do you think—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do you think there’s anybody on the other side of the House who wants to bet with me—can we bet in the House? I guess not, eh? Probably not, eh?

Interjection: Sure you can.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, just even a loonie; bet with me a loonie that they’ll be time-allocating this bill very soon, time-allocating it to end the debate.

Let’s talk about the energy policy of this government. They’re out doing their little message tract now.

It’s interesting, last Thursday morning, Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, had a press conference. He was going to be the spokesperson on the new long-term energy plan that just two days before the Minister of Energy had introduced over at the Macdonald Block, but now the Minister of Finance was going to be the salesperson on it. Of course, he implies that we’re having this discussion and different ministers are going to different places. I happened to be over at Global studios on Wednesday night taping Focus Ontario, and the Minister of Energy didn’t even know that the Minister of Finance had booked the media studio and was doing a press conference the next morning.

Talk about the Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy syndrome that’s going on over on the other side of the House. We never know if it is Brad Duguid’s voice or Dwight Duncan’s, or maybe Dwight Duncan is just a very good ventriloquist.

Anyway, let’s talk about—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Let’s talk about this great \$87-billion bit of fiction that they’re talking about in their long-term energy plans. They’re introducing this with the goal of—remember what I said—October 11, 2011. This is not a long-term energy plan. This is something they want to take to the people now, hoping that they are going to believe this bit of fiction versus the last bit of fiction.

Do you remember George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy? He said the Green Energy Act—do you remember that, to the member for Ottawa West—Nepean and the Minister of Infrastructure? Do you remember George Smitherman telling people that the Green Energy Act—

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I remember Ernie Eves.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order, government side.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —cost on the hydro bills 1%—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. I would ask that the members give the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke a chance to finish his comments before making theirs. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the minister, I’d be glad to have a debate after my time is up. We can have it in the lobby, if he’d like. But right now it is my time.

So Minister Smitherman, at the time, said 1% per year. What has happened to hydro bills since the passing of the Green Energy Act? They have exploded. Why? Well, let’s just look at some of these—and the Premier is bragging about signing 16,000 contracts under this bill. Why have they signed so many contracts? Well, you’d have to be a fool not to be wanting to get in on it. It’s a bonanza. If somebody is willing to pay you an exorbitant rate for something that costs one tenth of the price they’re willing to pay for it—are you well? Of course

you're going to be looking to sign a contract, and that's what is happening under their so-called Green Energy Act.

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What it really is is a social plan. It's a wealth redistribution program. You're putting the cost—for every contract that one person, one group or one gigantic multinational corporation like Samsung or IKEA is going to benefit massively financially from, everybody else out there, all those seniors on fixed incomes, all of those families who are struggling to raise the children or maybe plan to help them with a university education some day—all of those people are being skewered by the Dalton McGuinty wealth redistribution program. For every one of those people who are profiting massively, you are getting the bill.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's no other way for it to happen, I say to the member from Peterborough, who says, "That's not true." Only one group can get the bill, and that's the energy ratepayer, except in the case of the rebate, where they're sliding a little bit over to the general taxpayer as well.

Listen, they will slide and hide and do whatever they can to—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Keep in mind October 6, 2011.

This plan that is paying all of these massive subsidies—and then they're talking about the jobs that are going to be created. The jobs that are being created: Why wouldn't those people—you see, they've left Spain because the industry has collapsed over there, and they're saying, "Okay, where is the next mark? Where is the next government that is willing to pay us way beyond what the cost of our service is? Oh, Ontario. Dalton McGuinty and George Smitherman are just holding out their hands, saying, 'Come on over, folks. We'll subsidize you to whatever degree you want.'"

How do you ever drive down the costs of the production, for example, if we're paying up to 80.2 cents for solar? There's no incentive for those people who manufacture solar components to lower their price when they know that the people they're selling them to who are going to generate the power are getting paid a massive subsidy. It's simple economics. If you want to drive down the price, there has to be some pressure from the other side. Somebody is getting 80.2 cents. They're not going to pressure the guys supplying the components, because at 80.2, there's lots of it for all of us—no shortage of it. But who's it coming from? It's coming from that struggling family, that struggling senior who is wondering if they're going to be able to have enough money to have a life of dignity down the road. They never budgeted for hydro bills—what's happening under this government and under this Premier.

It's word games. The Minister of Energy says, "We did a survey. We had consultations with people across Ontario, and they told us, 'We want clean energy.'" I know you can't use the word "asinine," so I won't, but—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I caution the member.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I heard that once before, that you can't.

Do you really expect—you get somebody on the phone and say, "Would you like clean energy?" What would be the chance that someone would say "No, I'd like dirty energy"? It's so preposterous that it's laughable. They use this as some kind of a justification for an expensive energy experiment. Of course everybody in this province, given the choice, would want clean energy versus energy that is dirty or even unclear. It's not complicated. But what else every one of those people would tell this government, if the government was interested in listening—and I know that the member for Kitchener-Conestoga says it's important that we get opinions from all sides, but if they would be interested in listening to the people of Ontario, they would hear that they cannot afford on their paycheque to pay somebody like IKEA. Just think about it.

There's no logical way that you can ever square that. You can't. You're all familiar with IKEA. The irony of it is that IKEA is viewed as a furniture retailer that is kind of in a market that would be of use and assistance to lower-income people, because their products are supposed to be a little more economically priced than they might be at—I'm trying to think of some expensive furniture store, but I don't go into them so I can't think of them.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Harry Rosen.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, no, I don't think—

Interjections.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ridpath's.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Ridpath's. I walk by it every day. Yeah, Ridpath's. I didn't know how expensive they were; I've never been in it. Nothing against Ridpath's. If somebody can afford them—some people can.

But here it is, IKEA, \$2.5 billion. You know how Carl Sagan used to say, "Billions and billions of stars"? Well, they make billions and billions of dollars' profit. So what does this government do? "We're going to give you a little bit more. You've put these solar panels up on your roof on your warehouse, and we're going to pay you 71.6 cents for every kilowatt hour that you produce"—71.6 cents. And you see, the little guy, the poor company, probably can't afford the capital outlay, but IKEA can, because they made 2.5 billion euros—not dollars; euros—last year. It's a poster boy for everything that is wrong with this government's energy policy. It's only the start. If I had more time, I'd get into it a little more. If they want to give me more time, Madam Speaker, I'll take it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Just before we go to questions and comments, I wanted to let the House know that we have representatives from the Black Creek Community Health Centre here: Cheryl Prescod, Joesi-Ann Nelson and Sabrina Gopaul.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for his insight.

I would like to talk about Hamilton. The government has started up in the last few days and bragged about all the jobs they've created in Hamilton. In Hamilton, we've lost 20,000 jobs in manufacturing since 2004 under this government's watch.

They just announced 300 jobs at JNE in Hamilton. Well, JNE won't be on line for two years. They didn't talk about the hourly wages that the people will get. They didn't talk about the location or where the plant would be. They didn't talk about whether the company would be managed by the Chinese or managed by Ontario people. So there are a lot of grey areas in those 300 jobs.

Then they talked about Max Aicher, who now is going to create 300 jobs at the former Stelco. But that deal was cut three years ago, through Stelco of the time, and they had already arranged for the number one bloom mill and the bar mill to be sold to this company. The only reason it didn't get on line three years ago is because of some lack of funding organization by the company in Germany, but now they've got on line, and I don't think the money the government gave them is going to increase the number of jobs they are going to create in Hamilton. That's an old deal.

So everything they've been bragging about for the last two weeks is stuff that was already in place. They didn't create it; they didn't bring it to Canada. It was already done by other groups, other facilities that had been involved with them. So they're once again jumping on the bandwagon when they didn't do it. I hear a lot of that around here, where they take credit for things they don't do, and that's another example, right in my own area, my own riding, when I know that factually it's incorrect what they've been touting. They were in there to make a big announcement. In fact, the Premier snuck in the back door and left by the back door and wouldn't even talk to my steelworker brothers and sisters who were standing out there and wanted to talk to him.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to enter the debate today in support of Bill 135. This bill reflects our government's commitment to helping Ontario families and businesses through fiscally responsible management.

Thanks to our government's prudent approach, Ontario's economy is emerging from the global recession.

Our government is responding responsibly with our Open Ontario plan. With the changes we have made, nine out of 10 taxpayers are paying less income tax than they did a year ago.

With the changes we have made, over 180,000 jobs have been created since the end of this recession. Our real GDP has increased for four quarters. This means our economy is growing, and it's really good news. Ontario has recovered 70% of the jobs lost in the economic downturn, whereas the US has recovered only 10% of the jobs lost.

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This bill is all about helping Ontario families with their jobs and their pocketbooks and helping them to

protect their schools, to protect their health care and to breathe clean air. Ontarians deserve nothing less than that. I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I think my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke put it well when he said that as a result of Bill 135, the energy ratepayers of Ontario are going to pay and pay and pay with respect to the situations that have been created by this bill. When we look back and wonder why Ontarians are going to be facing enormous increases in their energy bills in the next five years, I think it goes back to the fact that this government, notwithstanding their announcement last week, has no plan for energy for Ontario for the foreseeable future. What we have are a series of announcements, a series of feel-good, green announcements that have nothing to do with sound public policy but have everything to do with optics, with political posturing, with the fact that October 6, 2011, is on the horizon and they're going to say everything they have to say to push the right buttons and get the people of Ontario to vote for them.

When you look at what we've actually seen, what the announcements here have been—and we tried to discuss it during the discussion on the Green Energy Act, with respect to the fact we are spending \$7 billion on solar and wind power. Sure, we should be investing some money in renewable energy, but the fact of the matter is that is not going to be enough to manage the needs of Ontarians either in terms of residential needs or industrial needs in the next 10 to 15 years. Now what we've got is a realization that maybe we aren't going to be able to power General Motors on solar power; maybe we need something else. Now, all of a sudden, they're devotees of nuclear power; all of a sudden, out of the blue, gee, the light has gone on that we need to be investing in this. The problem is that we've put all our money in renewable energy. So they can make announcements till the cows come home, but the fact of the matter is, we don't have any money for that. Where they think it's going to come from, I have no idea.

As for the plan that we're going to close those coal-fired plants by 2014, don't hold your breath. It's not going to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he speaks a lot of home truths. He started off his speech talking about the \$1.1-billion contribution per year that this government is going to make on the backs of future taxpayers—\$1.1 billion per year over a period of some five years. He talked about how that is going to add to the debt load that Ontarians are facing, particularly the debt load that people, some of whom aren't even born yet, are going to have to pick up in subsequent years because of this government's actions. I think he was absolutely right.

He talked about the costs of electricity having gone up 75% over the last number of years, and I don't think anyone can deny that that is true. Certainly people from my riding contact me talk about the enormous costs, and they show year after year how those costs go up. Even the member from Peterborough showed and admitted that his costs since last year—he said they only went up \$8, but they still went up. If he can notice an \$8 increase, I'm sure that people on more fixed incomes would feel that much more.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked about the increase of 46% that is budgeted over the next five years and how that is going to cost consumers. He also talked about what is going to happen after those five years. If you're no longer getting the 10% reduction five years from now, and if this government, by some miracle, were re-elected, they would have to be borne then, and the cost would jump enormously. Or the more likely thing is, it will be cancelled after one year and people will be left to fend for themselves.

I congratulate the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for bringing these facts to light.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Mississauga–Brampton South, Whitby–Oshawa and Beaches–East York for their contribution and comments.

The sad reality—and I only have two minutes left—is that this government is doing everything it can to confuse and obfuscate the issue here. They want everybody to believe that somehow we are going to be the world leader in clean energy, we're going to be the world leader in manufacturing clean energy components. Everybody wants to believe that they can be the world leader and everybody wants to believe that somehow that goal is achievable at little cost. But what they have not been straight about from day one is that you can't do those things. They want to mask it and talk about all of the other problems that they have in the system and everything. The reality is that they have bitten off way more than the Ontario family, Ontario business and Ontario senior can digest.

This government and their policies and their long-term commitments to massively subsidizing the production of power in this province—who wouldn't want the cleanliness of renewables versus some other choices? Who wouldn't want them? But this province and this government always talk about its international relationships.

You're right. We are not an island unto ourselves. We do have to compete in the big, wide world, and if you don't have an electricity policy that makes you competitive, we will struggle and everybody in this province will suffer as a result, and the blame will be at the feet of Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My, my, what an election will do to political parties, especially when they're in govern-

ment. I have been in this place for some 20 years and I'm just amazed every time we come to about E minus 360—in plain talk, that is about a year before an election—and we see governments all of a sudden just start to react to what they think are going to be the issues in the next election.

I give this government full credit. You know what? They woke up. All of a sudden they woke up one morning and said, "My God, Dalton, we've got a problem, and it's electricity bills." They said, "We need to do something because people across this province are mad. It doesn't matter if they live in southern Ontario or northern Ontario, they're mad every time they open that electricity bill."

I look at my good friend Mr. Bailey; Sarnia–Lambton is his riding. People in his riding—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What is it?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I got it right for a change. Not bad, eh? Maybe one day I can sit in that chair, Speaker, because I remembered a riding other than my own.

I listen to my friend from Sarnia–Lambton, who gets the same experience with his constituents that I do. They open their bill every month. They work hard. They pick up their bill at the mail. They open it up and find out their electricity bills are going up to the point that they can't afford to pay.

We have stories in our constituency offices—and the government members have the same—where people are saying, "Can I afford to pay my hydro bill or do I not pay my rent? Can I afford to pay my hydro bill or do I buy groceries for my family? Do I pay my hydro bill or do I make the payment on my car?" Those are the kinds of decisions people are having to make.

I'm not complaining. I make a good buck, so I'm not going to start complaining that I don't have enough money. I make \$130,000 a year, so if I can't pay my hydro bill, there's something wrong with my personal finances. But I have to tell you that when I look at the hydro bill that I get at both my house and my cottage, I'm just floored.

I've got a property out at Kamiskotia Lake and I heat that place 12 months a year. When I'm not there, I turn the thermostat way down. I didn't need a smart meter to tell me that. I didn't need Dalton McGuinty to tell me that. When I'm not there, I've got this thing set up on an electronic control panel that basically says, "When you're not there, you don't detect motion inside the building, turn the heat down," and I just keep it warm enough to not freeze the pipes. But when I go back there, the electric heat comes up. I put the wood in the wood stove and I get the heat back up again. Do you know how much I used to pay about four or five years ago with a 22,000-kilowatt heater back then, versus now that I've got a 12,000-kilowatt heater? My hydro bill has tripled. I've gone from \$175 a month to—last year, I was paying over \$600 a month. And I say, I can afford it. I've got a good wage; I can pay that \$600. Am I happy about it?

Absolutely not. But I'll tell you, in our constituencies, how many people make \$130,000 a month?

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Mr. Michael Prue: A year.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A year, excuse me. I wish I made \$130,000 a month. Oh, Lord Almighty, that would be great. I think I got all the members excited there all of a sudden. Whoa. What a cha-ching that was. They were listening. I had their attention, that's for sure.

But the point is, how many people in our constituencies make the kind of money that we do and are able to pay those kinds of hydro bills? I think most of them can't.

This government all of a sudden woke up and said, "We've got a problem." Andrea Horwath and the rest of the NDP caucus were coming into this place day after day after day last spring and this fall, saying, "You've got to take the HST off the hydro bill. Not only is hydro going up to a point that people can't afford to pay, but you've given them a double whammy by taking the HST and applying it on the hydro bill, where it wasn't applied before. So people are having to pay the provincial sales tax on a hydro bill that they never had to pay before." Day after day, Andrea Horwath would come into the House and say, "Take off the HST. Take off the HST." Then, the Liberals did what the Liberal policy is. First of all, they denied there was a problem: "No, no. Andrea Horwath doesn't know what she's talking about. Hydro bills aren't too high in this province."

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, there they go again. Some of them are a little bit later than their Premier. They basically said no—deny, deny and deny. "There's nothing going on." And when denying didn't work, they said, "Oh, well, then she's wrong. She doesn't know what she's talking about." So they'd return to the House day after day and they'd say, "Well, you know, Madam Horwath, you don't know what you're talking about. People in Ontario feel happy about their hydro bills." Then they did the third part of policy development in the Liberal caucus and they adopted what the NDP wanted in the first place.

That's typically the way it works around here. We're glad to give you a suggestion that finally the government has listened to. For that, we're probably going to have to vote for this bill, Paul. I know my friend from Hamilton—Centre?

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton East.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hamilton East—Stoney Creek? My friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek I know is going to have a hard time coming and voting on this, but you know, my good friend, we've worked hard to give people a cut on their hydro bills. We came into this House, we had the petition campaigns, you travelled around the province, along with our leader and others, and we managed to get this government to finally recognize that they've got to do something.

So they're going to take—I know; I understand the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is going to

correct me in a minute, and I do know that this is a temporary measure. But 10% off the hydro bill now—man, I don't care if it's temporary or not, if I live in Hamilton East—Stoney Creek or I live in Timmins. "Give it to me now," is what I've got to say.

We're going to probably have to vote for this, because it is a step in the direction that we wanted to take you. We think you should take off the HST. That would make it permanent. That's the first step. I'll talk about the hydro policy part after, but at least the 10% is a help.

I've got to say, reluctantly, the government has come and all of a sudden woken up to the light and said, "God Almighty, we've got to do something." So they've offered a 10% reduction, retroactive, January 1.

Now here's the problem. I know my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek would get up and would make sure that I make this point clear: This is a temporary measure. This is not just a temporary measure in the sense that it's only for five years, but read the bill. The bill basically says, "With a stroke of the pen at cabinet, the government can annul the 10%." They don't even have to come back to the House.

Okay, so I know the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, like I and everybody else in Ontario, doesn't believe that this government's going to come back for a third term. I don't believe it; you don't believe it; I don't think most people in Ontario believe it. But let's say it was to happen. Dalton McGuinty could walk to the cabinet table and say, "I, the Premier of Ontario, sign this particular order," and the 10% is taken away.

I'm saying to people in the next election, hey, be wary, because we know what these people are like. We've seen them before. The Dalton McGuinty pledge that he took in the first mandate when he ran against the Conservatives way back when—"I will not raise your taxes" was the pledge. And what did he do? He did the HST; he did the health tax.

Mr. Paul Miller: Eco fees.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Eco fees. He has done all kinds of taxes since then. So I don't trust that he's actually going to maintain a promise the third time around. He didn't maintain it the first time. Why should I think he's going to maintain it the second time? And I certainly don't believe that he's going to maintain it the third time. You know that old saying, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me? That's basically what this is all about.

Let's understand what this is all about. This particular provision in Bill 135, although a good measure, is a response on the part of the McGuinty government saying, "I've got a political problem. We need to fight the next election. People in our constituencies are complaining, as they are in opposition members' constituencies, and we need Liberal candidates to say 'Here's some good news that we can give to the voters in the next election.'" It couldn't be a promise, because they knew a promise would not be believed on the part of the voters, so they had to do something concrete going into the next election. That's what this is all about.

The first part is that this is a temporary measure, and it could be taken out by a strike of the pen by way of a cabinet order after this is passed into legislation. I say, would you really trust Dalton McGuinty to maintain this promise after the next election? I'll let you decide that, the voters of Ontario. I know which way I'm voting. I'm voting for Gilles Bisson, because I think he's a great representative, and he's a New Democrat. Oh, that's me. Sorry. I can't do that, can I? I thought you'd have some fun with that one.

But here is the second part, and you have to ask yourself a couple of questions: Why is it that the hydro rates in this province are going through the roof? Why is it that we find ourselves in this position where our hydro rates, which used to be the most competitive in North America—when I came here 20 years ago, the electricity rates in Ontario were among the lowest hydro rates in North America. Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia: We were in the pack. We were the lowest in North America when you compared our hydro rates. My Conservative friends, I know you're going to have a problem, but I've got to say that it started with you guys, unfortunately. There was a guy by the name of Mike Harris, and then eventually a guy by the name of Mr. Eves, who said, "Do you know what? We don't like this principle of power at cost." Ontario Hydro back then was set up as a crown corporation, and it basically said, "We will produce electricity, distribute electricity and sell electricity at cost because it's an economic development tool," as the member from Renfrew correctly said. Industries in Ontario, our natural resource-based and manufacturing industries, are industries that use a loss of electricity. For us to have a competitive edge on our competitors in places like Illinois, Washington and other places around North America, Ontario maintained a low electricity price as a competitive advantage for the province. We built our economy on the basis of cheap, reliable electrical power. That was the system we had back then.

The Conservatives came along and they said, "Well, we're smarter. We think the private sector will do a great job." Well, guys, it has been five or six, seven, 10 years now. It has been about 10 years. Are they doing a better job? We started the privatization of hydro under the Conservatives. We started the deregulation. I'll give the Conservatives some credit. They didn't accelerate the privatization and the deregulation so much. They announced it, but then they got turfed out of power and the Liberals got elected. Now remember that Mr. Dalton McGuinty in opposition stood with New Democrats and said, "We are opposed to the initiatives of the Harris-Eves government to privatize and deregulate the electricity market. We think that's a wrong thing." Mr. McGuinty gets elected, and my God, he's a Conservative on steroids. That guy was going faster than any Conservative dared to do when it came to the privatization initiative. They continued along the path of deregulation. They continued down the path of privatization, entering into what they call now a competitive market. Some competitive market: We've now gone from the lowest electricity rates in North America to some of the highest.

Mr. Paul Miller: Number one.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't know if we're number one, but you might not be wrong. But we are certainly amongst the highest in North America.

What consequence has that had? The member from Renfrew had it right: It's scaring jobs out of this province by the oodles. In the community I come from, Xstrata used to be the old Kidd Creek mine. They operated a smelter and refinery, concentrated in the city of Timmins. Why did they build the refinery? Why did they build the smelter in the city of Timmins back in the 1970s? It was electricity. You could build a refinery in Ontario and it made economic sense. It didn't matter if you were Texas Gulf from the United States or you were Falconbridge from Canada or you were some other mining company from somewhere around the world. You said, "Where am I going to build a refinery? North America, Ontario: cheap electricity rates, lots of workers, the ore is right in the backyard." Everything was there, so they said, "We'll build this." So they built it and it employed, with the full-time staff and with contractors and everybody else who works in that place, probably about 2,000 people.

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So here we have this great investment, value-added opportunity in the city of Timmins where we were refining and smelting ore, and we were doing it greener—greener—than anywhere else in the world. Our refinery and our smelter was the greenest refinery-smelter in the world. What did we do? We ended up shutting it down. Why? We sat at the cabinet table with Premier McGuinty last winter when we went through all of this, and Xstrata said, "We are leaving Ontario for two reasons. One is the electricity prices. We can't afford to do business in Ontario." And the surprising part is they said, "And your environmental rules." I thought, boy, if I was the Premier of Ontario and some company came and told me that, I'd take them to task, but that's a whole other story. But they closed. They have since closed the plant and they've now moved production into the province of Quebec, where what? You're able to buy electricity at cost again, because Quebec Hydro runs as the old Ontario Hydro used to, which is as a crown corporation, owned by the province of Quebec, that produces, delivers and sells electricity at cost. Why? Because it's an economic development tool, and a great economic development tool. They took 2,000 jobs from the city of Timmins.

We look across the province, and it is the story. Which paper mills are going to come back up and running when the market comes back? Which pulp mills are going to come back up and running when the power comes back? Which sawmills in northern Ontario are going to come back up and running when the price comes back? It's going to be those that are able to operate at the lowest cost, and when we push electricity prices through the roof, well, then, my friends, it is very hard to do economic development.

For the average individual citizen living in any community across Ontario, it's the same story. They are finding it impossible to be able to pay their hydro bills at

the end of the month. An increasingly larger number of people every month are having the problem of paying their hydro bill. So the government basically took the Conservative agenda, they put it into fast gear and they started to privatize.

Then they went to the next step, and I know some of my friends in the environmental movement are going to have a problem with me, because I'm going to say what I think is part of the problem. Green energy is something that we should be doing. I don't think there's a member in this House who doesn't believe that green energy is a direction to take, but how green is the green energy we're producing in Ontario if we're not dealing with conservation? You've got to ask yourself the question. If we really believe in green energy, then what you need to do is lower the demand. The way you lower the demand is not by shutting down the plant by driving the price up. You do that by going to companies and individuals and saying, "What can we do in order to lower your need for energy within your business or within your home?"

Imagine a province like Ontario that, rather than investing on the generation side of green energy, had said, "We're going to invest on the conservation side of green," and if we were to go to the member from Stoney Creek and say, "In your riding, sir, anybody who has a home and who wants to save energy will have a retrofit program in order to assist the person to put in new insulation, to change windows and doors, to change heating systems, to be able to use appliances that use less electricity." In your riding, and I would argue in your riding, the member from—

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Kitchener—Conestoga, people would be running at the doors saying, "Where can I get some of this money? I've got a house that's 40 years old, that's got old insulation; the windows need to be changed etc." It might mean all of that costs \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000. But if you had a conservation program that said, "We're going to pay a part of that by taking the money that we've invested in green energy that we're putting forward today, such as smart meters"—one and a half billion dollars—and a whole bunch of other initiatives that the government has got that I believe are not driving conservation, people would be lining up at the doors to do the retrofits on their homes.

What would that do to our economy? That means you can't outsource those jobs. You can't contract out those jobs. Those are jobs that are going to be done by people here in Ontario. But not only that; the consumer's going to save because for the investment of being able to do the green energy conservation in their home, they would be in the position of being able to save not only on the hydro bill but on their gas bill as well. So Ontario would be doing what no other province and no other jurisdiction has done if we were to do what the NDP has proposed, which is to be extremely aggressive on the conservation side of green, not necessarily just on the generation side of green.

That's my problem with what the government is doing. What the government is doing is taking pretty well

all of its eggs—not all of them, but most of them—and putting them on the generation side of green. They're saying that the way we deal with green energy is by building green energy generation—wind, solar and others—that are extremely more expensive than what we pay for hydro, nuclear, coal and the rest.

Should we shut down coal? Yes. That's not my point. My point is, we are subsidizing the generation side of green where I believe we should be subsidizing the conservation side of green. That would allow us to keep our rates down and to use less electricity, which means to say we would generate less electricity.

It seems to me, as an environmentalist—which I am; I consider myself an environmentalist from northern Ontario—you get a bigger bang for your buck on the conservation side. Part of the problem here is that one of the reasons that our hydro bills are going up is the government is taking the money, the public purse, and also the money with regard to the hydro rates in order to fund the green generation side.

For example, under some of the programs, where it costs Ontario hydro on average about five cents per kilowatt hour to generate electricity, we're paying some people 80 cents per kilowatt to generate electricity. Who in their right mind would do that? I understand that you've got to give an incentive in order to encourage some of those technologies; listen, I get it and I would do some of that. But to say all my eggs are in the basket of the green generation side? We're driving the price through the roof; that's why we're figuring that electricity is going to go up over 50% over the next little while as far as the rate. It's because all of this green energy that's coming online is going to have to be paid for. The government says, "Look at us, we're green; it's wonderful; it's great for the environment." I don't doubt that it is, but is it the smartest way to be green?

I'm saying we should have taken the money and put it on the green conservation side and put some on the green generation side. We should have looked at this as a bit more of a longer-term thing because the government has tried to accelerate this in such a way that suits their political fortunes: "Let's get all this green generation announced and online so that we're in a position next election to go run around and see the windmills and see the solar panels and all the other stuff that we've done to say how great a job we've done." But I would argue that we probably should have taken a bit of time to figure out what the right mix was. I think that's where the government is wrong.

Will I vote for this bill? Probably, because it is giving a 10% reduction on hydro bills. Will the government maintain it for five years? I doubt it. I don't think McGuinty is going to get re-elected for a third term, but if he does, I believe they'll sign this and kill it pretty quickly after. I think that this is an admission that the government's energy plan does not work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always a pleasure to make some comments following a presentation by the member

from Timmins–James Bay. There's no question that he always speaks from the heart for his constituents and he's one of those defenders of the true north. But I'm looking forward this afternoon to hear another champion of the north, Mr. Bill Mauro from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who is extremely well familiar with the issues affecting the north, especially in his own riding.

I am sure he will be talking about not only the thousands of jobs that have been kept, but the new jobs that have been created and the new industries that opened up in the north which are so important. We must not forget when we address the House, especially on the so-called 2010 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review, that this government has come a long way in the few short years that it has been in power, considering that for the last 10, 20 years, so many facets of our economic and social situation have been neglected by all levels of previous governments. Now the government has to face reality coming out of a very deep and strong recession.

I think we have done very well. I think we are leading, not only every other province in Canada, but I think any other state in North America. We have created hundreds of thousands of jobs. We have retained most of our jobs. We have cut taxes for 93% of our people. We have cut taxes for our small business people, and I think we continue on the same path. I believe that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are on the right path.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

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Mr. John O'Toole: I enjoyed listening to the remarks from the member from Timmins–James Bay. It has been said that he stands up effectively for his riding. Even today in question period, he asked a question of the McGuinty government, to stand up for First Nations in Kashechewan, I believe it was, in his riding who are suffering, and they blamed the federal government. He's standing up for things like fire safety standards, which, of course, are provincial. I listened intently, and I'd encourage the viewers to listen intently as well. He spoke in a most informed way on the whole electricity file. He was saying, "Can you imagine"—I'm not sure if he said "the stupidity," but it would have been an appropriate choice of words, for charging 80 cents for electricity and trying to have a competitive economy.

If you check out today's report, Today's Innovation, Tomorrow's Prosperity, this booklet—and for the viewers at home, it starts off at the top saying, "Ontario businesses trail their US peers significantly in patent output." At the very top are California and Massachusetts; the bottom is sort of a tie between Ontario and Quebec. This is an independent report that was established by the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, a highly respected organization, primarily made up of academics. They often want to talk about Jack Mintz and other things, but this is a report by Roger Martin—highly regarded—from the prosperity institute. He's dean of the Rotman school of business.

Mr. Bisson is correct. This report is correct. And who's wrong? The McGuinty government. They're on

the wrong path. Name one issue in your own house that hasn't been affected negatively. Think about your home: the electricity bill, your property tax. Can you get to see the doctor? Drugs cost more. There isn't a thing they haven't ruined. The—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for his comments. Once again, he touched on some important areas.

The government does stand up and say, "Where's your plan?" I think Premier McGuinty has been saying that for a whole week. Well, I'll tell you, let's talk about our plan. In the state of California, they use a lot of electricity.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Madam Speaker, I can't hear myself speaking. It's too loud there.

I've got to say that the state of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a second, please. If people would like to have private debates, I suggest that they go into the lounges and have them. Meanwhile, a speaker has the floor. Let us hear the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll give an example. The state of California started a conservation program. They use a lot of electricity for cooling in the summer, probably way more than we do. They have dropped their consumption by 40% through conservation from retrofitting homes, factories, businesses and schools. They didn't have to build one more nuclear plant, with a much larger population than we've got.

I would say that this government is moving in the wrong direction again. They're going to put us in debt up to our ears again. Our kids and grandkids will be paying off those nuclear plants for centuries, because they're not heading in the right direction. You can cut your consumption between 40% and 60% on any home in this province, if you want to, with the proper retrofitting. That's where you'll save consumption.

Half the factories are closed. We're not using as much electricity as we were, because they're all going somewhere else. So you're heading in the wrong direction, for sure.

And the 10% rebate? That's laughable. But we'll have to support it because they'll stand up and say, "Your party voted against it."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate.

It's a matter of the choices that you make as a politician when you bring your ideas and your opinions to the House. Each of the parties obviously will have its own opinion of things, but when the economic statement comes out, it's a chance to take a look at where you are as a jurisdiction, perhaps at how you compare to other

areas around the world, around the country and around the continent.

If we look at post-secondary involvement that we have here in the province of Ontario, how many of our young people go on to post-secondary, you'll find that we have the highest rates in the world.

When you look at what people find is important, the things that they want to have some money spent on—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —it's clean air, it's education, it's hospitals.

When you look at our taxation system—obviously, the other parties have said a lot about that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Could you stop the clock for a second, please. I would ask that the members who have spoken, especially the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, listen to the questions and comments from the member from Oakville.

The member from Oakville has the floor. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: When you look at the taxation system we have here in the province of Ontario, we've got the lowest corporate taxes in North America. Nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers have seen a reduction in their provincial personal income tax.

During a time when you'd have every excuse for not doing it, during a time when you've got a global recession unlike anything I've seen in my lifetime, certainly, we saw fit to introduce full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, because we know that—

Mr. Paul Miller: That will help the recession.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Well, it will help, member from Hamilton. You maybe want to take a look at some of the advice that's coming from educators around the world. If you want to do something about poverty, if you want to do something about an information technology age, if you want to train our young people for the future, you want to look at full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in our public schools, because it's something that helps.

There are choices you can make. You can close hospitals, you can fire nurses or you can do what we did: We cut drug prices in half.

I think we've set ourselves on the right track, and I think Ontario is doing quite well right now, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Timmins–James Bay has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all the members who commented. I just want to pick up on where it was left off.

The member said—the member from—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Oakville.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Oakville. Thank you. That's another riding I don't know.

The member from Oakville said it's all about choices. You're right: It is all about choices. But I don't believe that the average voter out there feels they're any better

off after seven years of the choices that your government has made.

It's pretty clear: 76% of those polled are saying they want a change. They're not voting Liberal in the next election. It's pretty clear you guys are gone. I think part of the reason for that is because you've made some choices that people aren't happy with.

You just have to ask yourself a very simple question: Am I any better off now, seven years after having elected Dalton McGuinty? The answer is no.

There are more job losses. There are more people who are worried about losing jobs than we had seven years ago. You have longer waiting lists in some cases, especially in the emergency wards of our hospitals. You've got real problems when it comes to energy prices in the province of Ontario, which is the subject of this debate. We are paying more taxes than we did seven years ago, when we entered into this contract with the Dalton McGuinty government here in Ontario, just on the HST alone. We went and added 8% provincial sales tax onto the service bills when it comes to fixing your car, calling a contractor into your house or paying your hydro or gas bill. People are not any better off.

I think the member made the argument that at the end of the day it is about choices. I think people will choose to get a change in the next election when it comes to what choices they want their government to give.

I believe that voters in the next election are not going to want governments that are going to do radical things. I think what people are going to want is what New Democrats are going to be proposing: that we've just got to do things right. We've got to slow things down a bit and fix what we've got now before we go off and do anything else crazy, any other grand scheme, such as we've seen come under this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to enter the debate here this afternoon.

I've been around most of the afternoon and have heard much of what has been said so far on the budget bill. I don't mind saying that I think it has actually been one of the better debates that I've heard in my time here, so I'm actually pleased to venture into it this afternoon with my 20 minutes.

As is no surprise, I don't think, to most, the opposition is using their time to continue their focus, to try to polarize the electorate on one issue, that being energy costs in the province of Ontario. That is fine; that is their strategy. They are looking to make that the ballot question going forward in October of next year, 2011. We've seen that be the pattern for the last two or three months, and I don't imagine that's going to change until we rise from this place next spring. They will continue to talk about energy. That will be what they want the public to walk into the polling booth on next October.

I'm not sure if that's good, bad or indifferent. If I was a member of the opposition, I would think I'd want to expand my platform and my policies a bit beyond that

and give people a reason to vote for me rather than a reason just to simply vote against the other guy. But we'll see what comes from them over the course of the next eight years.

1550

As we know, on energy neither opposition party has yet put forward a plan. At some point, they're going to have to do that. Quite frankly, their discussion on energy in the House is full of contradictions, in my opinion, but there will be an opportunity to speak on that as we go forward.

What they want to do also, as they focus the people of the province of Ontario on energy and energy only as we go forward into an election next year, is get them to forget about everything else that has been good, in my opinion, that's been accomplished by this government since we were elected in 2003. I can just highlight three very quickly.

They don't want people in the province of Ontario to remember—and I think every member in this place could list a series of examples—that this is a government that has spent \$60 billion, or close to it, on infrastructure since we came to government in 2003. When we came to government in 2003, we very clearly articulated that we saw infrastructure as one of three things that we thought were in a deficit position in the province. Long before there was a recession, we had made a decision through ReNew Ontario that we would contribute \$30 billion to infrastructure in the province of Ontario. We did that and followed it up with another \$27 billion.

There's nobody in this place who hasn't been a beneficiary of those investments. There's nobody in this place who can't speak to hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs being created through those infrastructure investments. I speak to this often because I can tell you, the small communities in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, communities like Conmee and O'Connor and Gillies and Neebing and Oliver Paipoonge, small communities with a huge land mass but a very small tax base—are the people we help the most.

Two things would have happened: (a) They simply could never have afforded to do the infrastructure projects that we helped them with, or (b) they would have done them at great expense on the residential property tax base. Those communities that I just listed off in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, many of them, do not have large industrials within their tax base. It's almost all primarily residential and, as I said, a very small residential base scattered over a large land mass. They wouldn't have been able to afford it—infrastructure of almost \$60 billion.

The NDP and the Conservatives don't want anybody in the province to remember that. They want you to forget about it. They want you to just think about energy.

How about education? I was just glancing at the clippings today, or I don't know if it was on the weekend. Ontario rated as, if not the best, one of the best places in the world to have your children go to school—one of the best public education systems in the world. Go back to

2003 when we arrived here. What was the situation then? That's another thing that the NDP and the Conservatives don't want the people of the province of Ontario to remember. I can tell you, the parents who have young children in school, parents who have kids in post-secondary, the teachers and everybody involved in education I think are going to remember that when they go to the polls next year. It won't just be about energy for them.

What about health care? They don't want anybody to think about health care either. I could sit here and use all my 20 minutes and another 20 on top of that talking about the improvements in health care not only in the province of Ontario but in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Some of my proudest moments in my seven years representing my constituency have been being able to show up and make announcements relative to health care improvements not only in my community—sometimes specifically my community of Thunder Bay, but oftentimes for the province as a whole.

Just last week, I was at Sunnybrook. We were video-linked back to Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and we announced that Sunnybrook and Thunder Bay will be the first two places in Canada to have a machine called HIFU, high-intensity focused ultrasound. They are now going to begin trials doing surgery with a beam of light that will require no scalpel, no anaesthetic, no needles, no nothing. They're doing the trials right now. That's happening in Thunder Bay.

Health care in the province of Ontario is leaps and bounds ahead of where it was in 2003, but, of course, the NDP and the Conservatives don't want to talk about that. I get it. They only want to talk about energy. But I think we've got about 10 months as Liberals to remind people what we've done. We'll compare our records, and I think we'll compare our records very favourably, to the administrations of 1990 to 1995 under the NDP and 1995 to 2003 under the Progressive Conservatives. I look forward to that debate, actually.

When it comes to energy rates, as I said at the beginning, that's a lot of what has been talked about. There still continues to be in this place this assertion that it is energy prices that caused the loss of manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario. Again, I could talk for 40 minutes or an hour on this. It has been one of the best misdirection plays that I've ever witnessed in my life. I will give some credit to the former leader of the NDP for pulling it off. He managed, over the last four or five or six years, to convince the people of Ontario that electricity rates were the reason why every large industrial in the province of Ontario was closing and leaving Ontario. It is absolutely ridiculous.

But that's not the focus of the discussion today; that's not the focus. I've talked in here before about what happened, not to mention currency, global competition, declining markets and a credit crisis, and on and on it goes. But that's a little bit too complicated for some people to talk about. They just want to talk about energy, completely misleading the people in the province when they say that is the reason why manufacturing left. My goodness. Come on, we all know better than that.

One example: For one mill in my riding, Abitibi-Bowater, a one-cent appreciation in the value of the Canadian dollar, one penny, is a \$3-million to \$4-million expense for them. At only one mill, \$3 million to \$4 million. When we were elected in 2003, the currency was 73 cents. It peaked out at \$1.10. Now it's at about a buck. That's 27 cents times \$3 million or \$4 million annually into their bottom line costs. That's what they're saying has nothing to do with the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me for a second. If you could stop the clock please. I hear a BlackBerry. It's buzzing. I'm asking members to check that their devices are off.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: That sounded like the horn. You know, when you get that call that says boop, you've run—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That's not a point of order. Thank you very much.

The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan has the floor.

Mr. Bill Mauro: On the large industrial file, we have many of our large industrials who are very happy now with the programs that we've brought forward on energy, the \$20 per megawatt hour that was announced in the spring budget as well as fixing the global adjustment part of the energy bills. We'll be making more announcements on that in the not-too-distant future. I'm very happy to announce as well, with AbitibiBowater in Thunder Bay, that through a lot of great work by a lot of people the pension piece has been accommodated. They're coming out of bankruptcy. We expect to see a great announcement from them in the very near future relative to a cogeneration plant at that mill, a major multi-million dollar investment securing the jobs at that mill. A lot of good work has gone into that over the last time.

On the energy file, as others have talked at length, I have to mention as well the Ontario clean energy benefit, a 10% reduction on your total electricity bill. I'm very proud of that and I want to thank all members of the northern caucus especially. I know others have said that they've been working on it for a long time, and maybe they have, but I can tell you that the northern caucus has been on this for quite some time. I'm very proud of the work that we've done on this. I'm happy that we've brought it in.

It's a little interesting now to sit back and watch. You don't expect that anybody is ever going to say, "You did good; you did you right." You always wonder how they're going to try to change the channel and what they're going to move on to next. It seems, at least in regard to this one, that at least some members of the third party are pretending like it never happened. I would say to the member from Timmins—James Bay that he did acknowledge it and I thank him for that, although there is at least one other member of your caucus who is pretending that it didn't happen and holding rallies to say as much. I actually found it a little bit funny when I saw it on the news the other day.

We'll get back to the energy piece in a little bit, but I do want to talk generally, very briefly, about the Ontario

economy as we sit here today. We saw the Minister of Finance state in the fall economic statement that economic growth, GDP growth, in the province of Ontario for 2010 is 3.2%—the leading jurisdiction in North America, as I understand it. I could be wrong, but I don't think there is a national or subnational government in North America that had 3.2% growth last year; Ontario did. We're doing something right here.

We all still know that with the American economy not doing well, that places a significant drag on the Ontario economy, given that the Ontario economy is primarily an exporting jurisdiction; and when the American economy is not doing well, that makes it more difficult for us. Having said that, in spite of that, and with a Canadian dollar that's at par, 3.2% GDP growth for 2010 in the province of Ontario. I'm told that 70% to 75% of the lost jobs are back post-recession. In what was the greatest recession since the Great Depression, nobody seems to argue that and yet, under those circumstances of 30 million to 40 million jobs lost worldwide, 3.2% growth in GDP last year and about 70% to 75% of the jobs have come back.

When the opposition parties focus their comments exclusively on energy and nothing else—and nobody denies that energy costs have gone up in the province of Ontario—they only talk about the cost side. They don't remind the people in the province of Ontario of what we have done to help them on the other side of the equation.

1600

What have we done to reduce their costs? I listed very quickly, while I was listening to the debate today, five things, and I know that I don't have an exhaustive list here. I listed five things that we've done that are significant. When you wrap these up—I'll mention them in a second—the stuff that we've done here is part of the reason why your don't see people marching on the front lawn of Queen's Park. If things were as bad as the official opposition and the third party want to make them out to be, where are the great en masse marches down on the front lawns of Queen's Park, like there used to be under my friend Mr. O'Toole's government? When he was in government, I remember there used to be a lot more people visiting this place on a regular basis.

Here's a short list that I came up with. I only got five—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member to refer to the riding and not the name.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker.

This is not a Letterman top 10; I only got five. I'm sure there are five more; maybe somebody else, when they speak.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit: I think we added \$400 or \$500 more for seniors. The official opposition, I believe, quite certainly voted against it. I'm not sure about the third party. That's giving another \$400 to \$500, at the maximum level, to about 2.4 million people, I believe it is, in the province of Ontario. As well, almost all seniors will receive \$400 to \$500 more than they were. I think we took it from about \$625 to well over

\$1,000—voted against by the opposition members. That's one of the reasons seniors aren't phoning my constituency, complaining about these things.

The northern energy credit: Again, I thank the northern caucus. We worked on that for a long time. It's an energy credit available only to northerners.

There's the 10% reduction that we just announced in the fall economic statement, the Ontario clean energy benefit; and the transition cheques that people in the province of Ontario are getting.

Here's one of my favourites that not too many people talk about anymore, the personal income tax reduction: 1% on the first \$37,000 of income, everybody eligible. If you make \$20,000, that's 200 bucks; if you make \$37,000, that's \$370. If you're in a dual-income household and you both make \$37,000 or more, that's \$740 with that 1% reduction.

You want to talk about why people aren't marching on the front lawn of Queen's Park; why the unions aren't there, upset; why the anti-poverty people aren't there? I haven't even mentioned the Ontario child benefit. There's my sixth; the list will grow as I speak. It's because these people know about these things. They are aware of these programs.

I don't expect the opposition to talk about it, but I think it's important that we, as Liberals, on this side remind people about that.

Personal income tax: 1% on the first \$37,000 of income—\$370. I've talked about this particular one in here before. To use up just that one—I listed five others—to use up just that one in relation to the HST you'd have to spend, I think, about \$4,000 or \$5,000 on items previously exempt from the PST before you'd use up just that one tax reduction, just that one. And that's only one of six that I could think of off the top of my head.

I always love it when the Conservatives talk about pocketbook issues as well. I wish I had 20 minutes just on that one, because that history, from 1995 to 2003, provides a wonderful example of how people who like to say they're taking care of people's pocketbooks in fact aren't.

Again on energy: We all have a record on this. We know that when the Conservatives were in government they created the debt retirement charge. It came in in 1999; 1999 is when it went on your bill for the first time.

We also know that from 1999 to 2003, while they were collecting that debt retirement charge for three or four years, the total debt went up by about \$1 billion.

I don't know how much they collected in those three or four years. I'm going to guess, on the conservative side, \$1 billion to \$2 billion; on the high side, \$3 billion to \$4 billion. I don't know what the number is; I acknowledge that. But let's round it off and say it's \$2 billion to \$3 billion.

So while they collected for the first time the debt retirement charge that's on everybody's hydro bill still today, created by the Conservatives, the debt went up by \$1 billion. They got \$4 billion, \$2 billion, \$3 billion they

brought in. Where did that money go? Where did it go? The debt went up. We don't know where it went. It went up by \$1 billion while they collected \$1 billion, \$2 billion, \$3 billion or \$4 billion; I don't know how much.

Diesel generators, the privatization: The member from Timmins—James Bay talked about that one. I remember it very well, and I remember specifically the part related to Hydro One. As a northern member, it scared the death out of me, I don't mind telling you, that the Conservatives were willing to go forward and privatize Hydro One. Take a ride on the highways of northern Ontario and you'll understand why. When you see those transmission wires and that infrastructure stretching for miles, with nothing in between—you can just imagine somebody privately owning that infrastructure. And we're going to try to get them to invest and maintain that when there's no return on that investment up there? That would have been an absolute disaster for northern Ontario, but the Conservatives wanted to do that. Everybody has a record on energy.

The NDP cancelled Conawapa. Boy, would that have been a boon for northwestern Ontario. That transmission line from Manitoba would have come right through northwestern Ontario. It would have created construction jobs. It would have been one of the biggest construction booms in our history. They came to government in 1990, and they decided to cancel it. The deal was already signed. It would have brought in clean, renewable hydraulic power at about four cents a click for 20 years. They cancelled it—I'm not sure why; they'll speak to it, perhaps—and they paid the government of Manitoba \$150 million to get out of the contract. I'm sure there's a reason.

The member from Timmins—James Bay talked about conservation. That's what he would do. They cancelled all the conservation programs when they came to power, and they didn't replace them with any. Hydro went up by 40% in five years under the NDP government.

They don't like nuclear. I don't know how you're going to support the demands of business if you don't like nuclear. You're going to have to explain it. Again, it's about a long-term plan. You're going to have to tell people at some point how you're going to do it.

I've got two examples that I'll mention to you. There are five coal plants in the province; two of them are in my riding. Our government is committed to converting both of those. The one in Atikokan is being converted to biomass. The one in Thunder Bay is being converted to natural gas. I consider those to be green energy projects. If you think we're paying too much for green energy—and I heard the member from Timmins—James Bay say we are, and he's not alone; others are saying the same thing. I'm interested to know if you're going to support those conversions. Those two conversions are going to cost money. They're going to be about \$300 million to \$400 million worth of construction for the building trade unions in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. All the men and women from the surrounding jurisdictions are going to get work there. Some \$300 million to \$400

million worth of construction value—and of course, the price point is going to go up when we produce energy with biomass and with natural gas. Do you support it? I support it. Hopefully, at some point we're going to find out if you do as well. Again, you've got to pick and choose. If you say you don't like coal and you want to go off coal, let me know what you're going to do; if you support those. I know that people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan are very excited about those two announcements.

On a general basis, the economy in Thunder Bay, relatively speaking, is doing quite well. Our unemployment rate in Thunder Bay for the last year or two has been one of the lowest in the province of Ontario. And before somebody stands up and says, "Well, that's because all the guys are out west, working," do you know what? All the guys are out west, working in Chatham or Sarnia or Toronto or Windsor or wherever you want. The numbers are relative and they're relevant. They make sense. We're doing very well.

I could speak for a long time about what's going on at Bombardier. I could speak for a long time about what's going on at Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute. I just mentioned the last great announcement that we had there that occurred at Sunnybrook, linked back to Thunder Bay Regional. What an incredible piece of good news Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute is. Some \$15 million from our government helped to seed the beginning of that institute in Thunder Bay some four or five years ago. There are 100 incredible jobs there now, with another 100 soon to come—a knowledge-based economy, diversifying the economy of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario.

Northern highway money has never been higher—750 million bucks; infrastructure dollars like crazy for the small municipalities. A brand new courthouse coming, brand new long-term care coming, the AbitibiBowater cogen that I talked about, the coal plants, going on and on—the construction trade sector is going to be busy for years to come, primarily as a result of investments that we've made in our riding. I'm very proud of it.

I'm happy I've had an opportunity to speak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always like to listen to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, because I think he's one of the members over there who does work hard. I think he may have missed his opportunity for cabinet. I know he often is not using the scripted speeches they give their members over there. I just want to think that he at least has a summary of what they've achieved. The five points he mentioned—I was listening very carefully. He articulates very well. The first one was the Ontario energy property tax credit for seniors. I think that it was a good thing, and we did support that provision. Here's the issue: We supported it because you went way too deep, way too fast on the HST on energy. Everyone in Ontario agrees with that. Why did you do it in the first place?

He's claiming it as a victory. I claim it as a retreat. That's what that one is.

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Number 2 is the energy relief for northern Ontario: more proof that northern Ontario was hemorrhaging up there because you've closed almost all the mills in the north because of the rates of the cost of energy.

Number 3 was the 10% reduction. Now, here's the issue on the recent bill, the one we're debating, Bill 135: They did give a 10% cut on the bottom line of your energy bill. What they didn't tell you, the other part, is that they charged you 13%, so you're still paying an additional 3%. Just don't pay attention to what he's saying, because he thinks these are victories. They're all failures, every single one.

Number 4 was the personal income tax credit. It's true: 1% on the first \$37,000. Let's just take a normal expenditure of \$100 a week for 52 weeks of the year. You would actually pay, in taxes, on that one expenditure of \$100 a week—it could be gas, electricity, whatever—\$676. The relief at \$37,000 is \$370. That's picking your pockets clean, and they're taking credit for it.

The last one was the issue that he talked about—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I listened to my friend from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I guess he's got a particular view of the world, and I would just like to bring him back to reality. He makes it sound as if there has never been an investment in the province of Ontario, but specifically northern Ontario, except since Dalton McGuinty came to power. Yes, there are some investments that are happening across the north—you have some in your riding; I have some in my riding—as there are across the ridings of northern Ontario. We're building a brand new long-term-care facility and we've got a \$2.7-billion OPG project going on, but those things happened before your government came around as well.

When I was in government in 1990 to 1995, we built three co-generation plants in and around my area. There was the building of brand new greenfield wafer board mills in the cities of Timmins and Wawa and other places. There was the restructuring of the forest industry that happened under, yes, the Bob Rae government, that allowed your community in Thunder Bay to restructure some of the mills in your community that were having problems.

I just want to say to the member, it's good that you're enthusiastic and excited, but don't get the idea that somehow or other there has never been an investment that has happened in Thunder Bay–Atikokan or Thunder Bay–Superior North before the time of Dalton McGuinty, because they certainly existed.

He also talks about how great the economy is in Thunder Bay and notes that the unemployment rate is down. Yes, I've seen the numbers in Thunder Bay, as I've seen the numbers in Timmins, in Sudbury and in different communities across the north, but the reality is that a lot of those jobs we had in the early 1990s and we certainly had at the time that Dalton McGuinty was

elected, back some seven or eight years ago, are gone. How many Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union members do you have in your riding at this point, sir? How many steelworkers do you have in your riding at this point, sir? How many of those high-paying jobs that used to be organized under the Steelworkers, under CAW and under CEP have gone away? And, yes, most of these people, unfortunately, have gone to other places to get work.

So if unemployment is down—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was here for most of the speech from my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, and it certainly articulated the activities in his riding.

It's always interesting when you scan the headlines in our clippings that we all get every day. I just noted one here today from the Globe and Mail on November 27. It says, "Pop Quiz: Which Province's School System Ranks Among the Best in the World?" This is a survey that's being released by McKinsey and Co. just today, and it talks about Ontario being one of the leaders in the world. It's an interesting report. From time to time, we hear other members cite independent reports, so I recommend that they take the opportunity to read this report. Ontario is the leader in the world when it comes to public education.

I always find it interesting to read editorials. I just picked up this one from the Sault Ste. Marie Star of November 26. The editorial says, "Most Costly Plan is No Plan at All." It said, "Ontario residents would be well served if they knew how the NDP and Conservatives would build a renewable energy network and how it would be financed." That's an editorial from the Sault Ste. Marie Star.

Something closer to home for me: The very interesting Peterborough Examiner had an editorial on Friday, the 26th, that talks about giving the McGuinty Liberals "credit for ... coming clean on what an upgraded, cleaner electricity generation network will cost" Ontarians. They go through the plan. They talk about how this investment "will produce tens of thousands of direct jobs in construction and manufacturing. It is also supposed to spur a large new sector of green energy companies manufacturing wind turbines, solar panels and other innovative products." And of course, they talk about how it's very relevant to Peterborough, because we have the GE Hitachi partnership employing in excess of 500 people who are part of—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad to respond briefly to the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan because he outlined his views with respect to Bill 135. I think he mentioned the commitment on the part of the government to close the coal-fired electricity generating plants.

I recall quite vividly the 2003 election, when I was seeking re-election to this Legislature, and an all-candidates meeting that took place in the community of Elmira, where the Liberal candidate gave a passionate

answer to a question and promised—in fact, committed—if the Liberals formed the government they would close the coal-fired generating plants by 2007. That was four years from the time that she was speaking.

I know that as a member of the government caucus during those days when we were listening to many of the experts in the energy field, we were advised that it was absolutely, technically impossible and not feasible to close the coal-fired generating plants in Ontario until at least 2014. That became our statement during that election campaign, but I was told by the Liberal candidate at that time that they would do it in four years.

So I'm wondering if the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan could explain by way of his response what happened. Why is it that the government couldn't close the plants in four years? Why is it that now, some seven years and a few months later, they still haven't closed the coal-fired generating plants? Why is it that they've had to break that promise several times now? Why do the coal-fired generating plants continue to exist? Why are they still belching noxious fumes into the air? Why would the government not have done something by now? Why is it that the government continues to break these promises? I would ask the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan to please address that issue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank all of the members who spoke, but less so for my friend from Durham today. I thought his comments were a bit more pointed than I have come to expect from him. Where did you get that \$600 number from? Where did it come from? Shout it across the floor and I'm going to try to work it into my two-minuter here. I don't know where that \$600 came from. You acknowledged the 1% reduction that's going to give you \$370, and if you've got a partner in the house who's working as well and making \$37,000, then it's \$740. I don't know where the \$600 came from, but you only talked about one of the reductions.

Anyway, none of that really matters. Right? What I'm trying to do is paint perhaps a bit of a broader picture here. We're talking on a budget bill. I'm trying to paint a bit of a broader picture for people who are going to the polls next year, and of course it's understandable that the opposition would not want to do so. People are going to think about infrastructure and how that's helped them in their particular communities. They're going to think about education. They're going to think about health care. They're going to think about the environment.

I'm a bit surprised, quite frankly, already a full year ahead of an election, that the members of the second and third parties are only going to focus on one thing, and that appears to be where they're going to plant their flag when it comes to the election. We do know that when you go into a campaign, at some point those members will have to articulate their plan for energy, and we do know that at some point those members are going to have to talk about their record, or lack thereof, when they were in government and what it is that they did.

You've heard us. I think we've been pretty fair on the file when we say that all parties of all political stripes in the past have maybe not done as good a job as they could have on the energy file. I think we've been pretty fair on it. I hear the language phrased that way. The Conservatives and the NDP will have to support and defend their record when they were in power, as we will ours. But it's not just about energy; it's about infrastructure, it's about health care, it's about education, it's about the environment and it's about a lot of things that we've done since 2003.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / *Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.*

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An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month / *Loi visant à désigner le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse.*

An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / *Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.*

An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / *Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.*

An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / *Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.*

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and

Budget measures and other matters, which stands in the name of the Honourable Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance. It received first reading in this House on November 18, and here we are debating second reading of this bill, which amounts, really, to a budget bill. Of course, it flows from the economic statement that was read into the House by the Minister of Finance a couple of weeks ago.

Our caucus has a lot to say about this issue. Of course, generally speaking, the budgetary policy of the government is bankrupt. But at the same time, this bill is its best effort to try to address some of the issues that have arisen in the last seven years. We continue to scrutinize it very carefully.

Our caucus is prepared to acknowledge that this is another in a string of omnibus bills that the McGuinty government has introduced. Many of the amendments are highly technical and warrant greater scrutiny. The amendments divert attention from the real issue, namely, that the fall economic statement is further proof of the McGuinty government's fiscal mismanagement. Expert economists have judged Dalton McGuinty as the worst fiscal manager amongst all the other Premiers in the country, and Ontario's real per capita GDP has declined by 8% since 2000. Meanwhile, the McGuinty Liberals spend \$2.1 million more per hour than they collect in revenue—and we would add that we don't believe that people can trust that the McGuinty government won't use provisions of this bill to raise taxes even further.

The government has used this bill to talk about a promised 10% reduction in hydro bills, and they call it the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act. This is intended to offset to some degree the significant increases in hydro bills, and the government would want us to believe that they are responding to the concerns of the people of Ontario. I'd like to read an email that I received from someone who lives in my area. I received it on November 15 and it reads as follows:

"I'm probably sending this out to deaf ears, or to someone who might not care but it's worth a try.

"I'm a single mother and work very hard for everything I bring to the table. I ask for no handouts and am proud that I can raise my son on my own. I do have a very tight budget, and having electric heat puts a real strain on my son and I, especially in the winter months that are upon us.... Question: Do I keep my son's tummy full or do I keep him warm, you tell me because HST is going to affect my hydro bill big this year. I'm really concerned about how much I have to subtract from my grocery bill in order to keep the house warm and my son from getting sick.... I don't know where to turn but I'm sure hoping you can help."

We talk about people who might be out there in our communities who have to choose between whether or not they're going to pay their hydro bill or whether or not they're going to go to the grocery store. Here is a constituent who, unsolicited, expressed that very view to me. That should be something that concerns all of us.

In terms of the response to this bill, I want to point out some of the editorial comments that have appeared in the

press in recent days about Bill 135 and some of the provisions in it. This is an article by Randall Denley of the Ottawa Citizen. In his article, which appeared on November 20, he indicated, "The Premier is living in a fantasy world where we pay alternative energy producers unrealistic prices for the power they generate, then pretend it's not pushing up our bills."

"By shifting costs from power users to taxpayers, McGuinty is really just taking the money from your left pocket instead of your right. This clumsy attempt to mollify those concerned about high power bills will cost \$6.4 billion over five years. You'll pay all that later, with interest. And the Liberals think this will make us vote for them next year."

"The government would have us believe that the gambit is affordable because the provincial deficit will be only \$18.7 billion, \$1 billion less than a previous estimate. Surely McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan must realize that a somewhat smaller deficit doesn't generate new money to spend...."

"If McGuinty manages his own finances the way he manages this province's, expect to see him at the soup kitchen soon."

Another article which appeared in the National Post—and it's an editorial—I think bears repeating in this place. This is from November 19:

"Ontario's economic update is in—and the provincial Liberals' desperation level is clearly up. In advance of the update, provincial Finance Minister Dwight Duncan had already leaked the Liberals' plan to cut hydro bills by 10% for five years by using \$1 billion in borrowed money. That populist sop would be ill-advised under any circumstances, but especially so given Ontario's projected 2010 deficit of \$18.7 billion."

"In 2003, Premier Dalton McGuinty declared: 'I won't lower your taxes, but I won't raise them either.' Well, he kept the first promise; but as for the second—not so much. In 2004, he subjected Ontarians to an annual health tax of up to \$900 per family. Over the next few years, he increased various licensing fees, including those for cars, boats, hunting and fishing. In 2009, he instituted upfront 'recycling fees' on a host of items, and in 2010 attempted to bring the second wave of his 'eco tax' (which he had to withdraw amid howls of protest.) And of course, he also introduced the Ontario HST, which has been calculated to cost the average family in the province an extra \$480 a year."

"And now there's the hydro bait-and-switch, which will be paid for by future taxpayers. If Mr. McGuinty thinks this short-sighted stunt will put the province's opposition Tories in a corner, he is wrong: Paying for this rate cut with borrowed money fools nobody."

Obviously, the editorial writer had a good understanding of the government's policy, because the writer is right on.

I would also make reference to an article which appeared, again, in the National Post on November 20. This is written by Lawrence Solomon, who in the past has been the executive director of Energy Probe; I

believe he still is. He called this plan a rebate scheme. He says:

"The rebate scheme—which is sure to dampen public revulsion at the way the power system is being managed—is especially impressive in how expertly the government has disguised its activities. To read the press reports, the government is deftly rejigging its provincial borrowing and fast-forwarding revenues from a long-term land registry contract to finance the rebate during a five-year transition period to a cleaner energy infrastructure. Sweep aside these sleight-of-hand explanations and the reality is actually much simpler: The provincial government is in reality providing voters with a five-year break on their HST while rapidly escalating the power prices that all consumers face. Because the province and the municipalities overwhelmingly own the power system, they are making off like bandits as power consumers get squeezed."

He continues, "Large industrial electricity consumers are also losers. Because these companies don't vote, the Liberals would have drawn no political benefit in applying the Ontario clean energy benefit to them. To the contrary, by collecting the HST from them, the Liberals are obtaining the cash they need to top up the rebate from 8% to 10%. In effect, the Liberal government is merely transferring the HST rebate that the large industrial consumers aren't getting to the pot of money going to the smaller consumers that can vote—residential consumers, small businessmen, and farmers."

"Of course, under the Ontario scheme, all consumers become losers. Rates, by the government's own accounting, will be climbing another 46% over the next five years, and then rates will jolt up another 10% as the Ontario clean energy benefit expires. By then, the new power system may also have expired. It took Ontario Hydro, running as a government-owned non-profit, 90 years to go bankrupt. Hydro's government-owned for-profit successors will be far quicker at reaching bankruptcy."

Strong words which continue to undermine the credibility of the government with respect to its hydro policy.

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Obviously, from our perspective in opposition, we are seriously concerned about this particular bill and about the government's budgetary policy generally, as well as its management of the hydro system. As we know, in the seven years that the McGuinty government has been in power, we have seen dramatic increases in hydro rates. Hydro rates have increased approximately 75%, and we know from the government's own document, its 2010 economic update, that they predict—and this is their very own document—that residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46% over the next five years, an average annual rate of about 7.9%.

At the same time, we know that many of the factors that are driving these increases continue unabated under this government. This is one of the significant reasons, I believe, why the government has experienced a significant decline in its popular support in recent months,

going back to approximately May of this year, where we now see, according to the public opinion pollsters, that if an election were held today, this government would face a resounding defeat.

I want to go back a few years to, actually, about seven years ago, when the government was newly elected and many of the members on the government side who are still here were newly elected in the Legislature. There was a great deal of heady optimism with the new Liberal government. They believed that they had been elected with a strong mandate to reinvest in public services. Certainly it was difficult, from our perspective in opposition, to contest that basic point, although we did our job in opposition in those days.

At the same time, I had an opportunity to bring forward a private member's resolution in December 2003. I chose to bring forward an idea that I'd had for some time, asking that the government of Ontario commit itself to a 25-year debt retirement plan, articulating five-year interim targets, such that the province of Ontario would be free from its debt in the fiscal year 2029-30. I outlined the reasons why I thought that the government should make debt retirement a higher priority. I believe very strongly, based on a very simple economic proposition, that during good economic times governments should seek to pay down debt as a high priority. If governments did this during good economic times, they would be in a stronger financial position if there was an economic downturn down the road.

I actually quoted from my very first speech in the Legislature, my maiden speech which I gave in the Legislature, again, about 20 years ago this very month. I said at that time, 20 years ago, "We in Wellington understand the economic value of hard work and the social value of personal responsibility. From this understanding stems a serious concern when our government refuses to live within its means, when our government grows until it begins to inhibit overall economic growth, when even excessive taxation does not prevent the expansion of government debt." That was my maiden speech, 20 years ago. I would still suggest that over the 20 years that I've been here, I have tried to bring forward ideas and suggestions that were entirely consistent with those value statements that I made when I was first elected here.

I would continue to build on that argument to suggest that the government should make debt retirement a high priority. We had support from a significant number of interested groups: the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, chambers of commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and others. I cited examples of other provinces across the country that had committed themselves to long-term debt reduction plans, including the province of Manitoba, which at the time was governed by the New Democrats. They were making debt repayment a high priority. I went on and on and on and called upon the new government to try to make debt repayment a high priority.

Unfortunately, the new government didn't think that was a good idea. They believed they had come into office

and they were going to spend. They were going to open the vault and spend and tax like there was no tomorrow. There was absolutely no interest in what I was saying at that time. There was no support. The government members, every single one of them who were here, voted against it, in spite of the fact that the New Democrats, if I'm not mistaken, were somewhat supportive.

I pointed out in that speech the Liberal government's campaign document that they had used in their 2003 election. Some of the Liberals who are here today campaigned on it and were elected on it. Some of them might remember it. In their campaign platform, which they called at the time *Achieving Our Potential*, they made reference to debt reduction. They said:

"We will make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down.

"We will not add to the provincial debt. We will pay down the debt as conditions allow, with all surpluses going directly to debt" repayment.

Unfortunately, as we know, that commitment was not kept. In fact, next year, if the current spending patterns hold, the Liberals are on track to double the debt from the level it was when they took office in 2003. What a shocking record of fiscal incompetence and profligacy.

This is the message that we're sending to our children and our grandchildren: that government cannot live within its means; that the government isn't interested in living within its means. The government will just add billions and billions of dollars of debt onto future generations and force them to pay higher taxes, because this generation is incapable of or is unwilling to live within its means. I find that to be totally unacceptable, and I would hope that the members opposite will give some pause to consider some of what I've said today, because we should all be concerned about the future generations and the financial legacy that we're going to be leaving those generations. Quite frankly, they're going to look back upon this time, and if future generations learn that the debt doubled during the period of 2003 and 2011-12, I think they're going to rightly draw the conclusion that this government was bereft of any willingness to live within its means and of any fiscal discipline. They will quite rightly point back to this government as a government that did not provide the kind of leadership that they deserved.

We know also from this 2010 economic statement that despite four quarters of consecutive economic growth, the Liberals have only reduced the deficit by some 3%, not 25%, as they claim.

They have not reduced discretionary spending by even one penny.

Revenue is up \$789 million, the vast majority of which is corporate revenue. It is obviously good news that companies are making a little more money but, at the same time, it is troubling because of the way the government is managing it.

The expenses are down \$246 million, and we understand that's a result of lower interest on the debt, explained by lower-than-projected interest rates and a lower

borrowing requirement because of the Teranet revenue and the lower deficit.

Under Premier McGuinty, program expenditure has increased by 80%, compared to a 60% increase in total revenue. We also see that, in terms of comparative economic data, the Ontario 2010 deficit is projected to be \$18.7 billion. We note that the deficits of every other province combined will total a fraction of this: only \$12.4 billion. Therefore, Ontario's 2010 deficit is \$6.3 billion greater than that of the other provinces combined—a shocking statistic. By comparison, the 2010 deficit for Quebec is \$4.5 billion, and in British Columbia, it is \$1.4 billion.

I think it's also important to point out the unemployment rate in the province of Ontario, which is also too high and very troubling. Ontario's unemployment rate is 8.6%, which is higher than the national average of Canada, which is 7.9%, higher than Russia, higher than South Korea, higher than Argentina, higher than Brazil, higher than Mexico and many others.

We know that unemployment is bad for an economy because it's a wasted resource, and a healthy economy allocates resources efficiently. But on the micro-level, persistently high unemployment acts as a drag on consumer spending, which in turn affects the entire economy. Typically, in a healthy economy, we would argue that consumer spending accounts for the vast majority of economic activity.

It would seem that the Premier blames Ontario's job situation on the global economic downturn, yet Ontario's unemployment rate has surpassed Canada's national average every single month since January 2007, which is almost two full years before the financial crisis.

Even prior to the economic crisis and collapse, Ontario had a net loss of 208,300 manufacturing jobs. In effect, Ontario has acted as a millstone on Canada's wealth creation for the last three and a half years. Ontario lost a net 141,600 jobs last year, and last summer Ontario's unemployment rate hit a 16-year high. We also know that under this government, Ontario has lost 295,000 manufacturing jobs in total, a 28% decline.

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The Liberals have claimed that the introduction of the HST will create 103,000 net new manufacturing jobs within 10 years. We have yet to see them.

Since 2005, Ontario's population has grown by about 500,000 people. That means that the provincial economy must add at least 100,000 jobs a year, on average, just to keep up with immigration and population growth. Dalton McGuinty's current annual average is approximately 61,000, considerably less than what is needed just to keep up.

These are some of the facts and some of the reasons why our party is strongly opposed to this government's budgetary policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for his input and some good stats.

This recent announcement by the government for the 10% Ontario clean energy benefit: If you look at the presentation the minister made—I think it's on page 11; I could be wrong—he admits that in the next few years the hydro costs are going to go up over 40% and even higher, maybe up to 70% when they implement the Samsung deal. The 10% that they've scrambled to give the people of Ontario: If you read the fine print, you're actually going to be paying a lot more in the next few years, way more than the 10% rebate that you're going to get. Once again, it's a half measure, or maybe even a quarter measure, to supplement the hard-hit Ontarians in many sectors, whether it's housing, whether it's poverty, whether it's hydro bills, whether it's the failed eco tax, HST. You name it, they've been getting hammered for the last seven years.

Job losses: They stood up today and were bragging about 140,000 jobs that they've created. They've lost 460,000 in total. They've gained 140,000 back, but the 140,000 jobs are minimum-paying jobs or a little above. They're not those \$50,000- and \$60,000-a-year jobs that supported a family of four and kept them above water and kept them in a manageable, decent style of living. These are jobs that some of these people have to work two and three of just to pay the bills. I've got people coming into my office who have nowhere to go, let alone can afford to pay their hydro bill. Their utility bills outweigh their rent. That's scary stuff, considering they can't even afford their rent.

This government has got a huge problem on its hands, and I'm certain the people of Ontario will be sending them a strong message next year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate again and pass comments on the remarks made by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. Obviously, we have a different recollection of what state the province was in in 2003. The province that we inherited from the Progressive Conservative government in 2003 was one that was pretty bleak, in my opinion. Ontarians didn't know if the lights would stay on. The previous government relied on five coal plants. That means that 25% of our electricity in 2003 came from coal-fired generation. That's not what Ontarians want. What they want is a change. What they want is clean, green energy, what they want is clean air, and I certainly know that in Oakville, with things that have gone on from a power perspective.

During a time of increased demand, somehow the previous government managed to decrease electrical output in this province by 1,800 megawatts. If you look at that in a general sense, what does that mean? That's the equivalent of Niagara Falls running dry completely. Somehow, at a time like that, at a time of increased demand, we had a government that was providing us with less electricity.

They had a brief experiment in deregulation in the market in 2002. The market simply rejected the crazy

ideas that were being put forward on the spot market. In a panic, they implemented extremely low, artificially low energy prices.

People were talking about some of the facts and the figures. What do we look forward to? GDP growth projection for Ontario is 3.2%, private sector growth for 2011 is about 2.4%, real GDP growth projection for 2011 for the province of Ontario is about 2.2%. We understand we're just starting to recover as a province. We understand that people need assistance. The clean energy initiative for the 10% off the bills is just to help people along.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I waited patiently to hear the member from Wellington–Halton Hills because with his experience here he brings fairness and balance to his commentary. I think it's fair to say, if you look at the numbers objectively, without all of the political rhetoric that we're hearing, that what he's saying is true. In fact, the numbers announced in Bill 135 and around it indicate clearly that the debt will be doubled and the deficit, which is almost closing in on \$20 billion on a budget of just over \$100 billion—20% of the spending today is money they don't have. On top of that, in the balance and fairness that he brings to it, all of the agencies—the universities, the schools, the hospitals, the children's aid—have deficits, all of them are struggling, all of them are afraid to speak out too aggressively because the government will slam them. He brings fairness to it in a government that fails to be straightforward with the people of Ontario and tell them that they have made a lot of mistakes.

They have spent a lot of money. That doesn't always equate to improved service. I'm worried for the people of Ontario under the failed plans in almost every category. There are some successes, and we would like to think they'd come up with some fresh ideas, but they seem to be backtracking. Most of this bill is about backtracking on errors they've made. The 10% off your electricity bill: Don't be fooled by it. They're trying to buy you with your own money.

In fact, if you want to look at it, you're paying 13% more for electricity just on the tax, the HST, and they're going to give you 10% back? They're still taking 3% from you, so they've failed on many accounts.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: When you listen to the member across, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, you would not know that our dollar has gone from 67 cents to almost parity with the US. You would not hear that there has been a world recession—never happened. You would not hear that the US, where 80% of our imports go, is still in a deep recession. You would not hear that Ontario has regained 75% of our jobs, when, in the US, they have only regained 10% of the jobs that they lost during the recession. You would not know that Ontario is showing world leadership getting out of coal—a tremendous,

tremendous decision. All countries will be out of coal in 20 years. Ontario has taken the leadership on that.

He did not mention that the incidence of asthma in children is down from 13% to 10%. He did not mention the ban on the cosmetic use of chemicals—something they would never have supported. There are two major chemicals that are down 80% in our urban streams as a result of that ban. He did not mention that.

Look at the Globe and Mail article last Saturday. Ontario schools rank among the best in the world. This is just tremendous. I'm just looking at that article, and we see the achievement of grade 3 students has gone from 54% to over 70%; and the achievement of grade 6 children has gone from 54% to 66%. These are amazing figures. They cover reading, writing and mathematics.

At the same time, we know that we inherited an infrastructure—whether it was in transportation, whether it was in energy—in 2003 that was in a shambles. We've spent that money. We've reinvested in our people. We have reinvested in our infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank my colleagues the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Durham for their supportive comments. I would respond to the member for Oakville, who talked about the situation that he recalls in 2003 when their party took power. I certainly remember those days very well. He criticized our government's policy with respect to hydro. Again I would ask him, why is it that his party promised that the coal-fired generating plants would close in 2003 during that election? The commitment was that they would close by 2007. Our party, at that time, articulated the truth, which was that it couldn't be done until at least 2014, and unfortunately the government has eventually found that out after having broken the promise several times.

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The member made reference to the green energy issue. I'll tell you, if you come up to our area sometime you would find that Green Energy Act is not very popular. In fact, it's seen as a huge drawback in terms of government policy because of the effect of the wind farm proposals that are pitting neighbour against neighbour and causing very serious concerns throughout rural Ontario in many of the ridings that the government currently holds. I would suggest that they listen to their constituents on that.

In terms of responding to the member for Ottawa–Orléans, listening to his response, I was just thinking it sounded very much like the mantra that we used to hear from Bob Rae's government. In the early 1990s, when they were in government, they tried to explain and excuse their difficult situation by blaming on it a high dollar, the recession, the US economy, anyone but themselves, and we know what happened at the end of their tenure in government.

The member indicated that all countries will be out of coal in 20 years; I dispute that. I doubt very much that the

Americans will close their coal plants any time within the next 20 years. They have a huge stock of coal as one of their natural resources. Even if we do close our coal-fired generating plants, if we really believe that the Americans will—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: Before I get into the meat of my presentation, I'd just like to make a statement. I remember coming here three years ago and sitting here and watching the finance minister stand up, point across the floor and start yelling that the opposition party left them with a \$5-billion deficit.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's \$5.6 billion.

Mr. Paul Miller: —\$5.6 billion; thank you. I guess if you live in a glass house you shouldn't be throwing rocks. I think we're at \$19 billion and climbing.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: The member across said I should get out more. Well, I do get out in Hamilton and I know that from 2004 to now—I believe the party opposite has been in power for seven years, 2004 to 2011. From 2004 to 2011, we've lost over 20,000 jobs in Hamilton in manufacturing. They just made an announcement about a potential 300 or 400 jobs coming to Hamilton. Well, we're about 19,600 short, so things aren't as rosy as they'd like to you think.

Getting into the meat of it, they have titled this bill the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibility Act, 2010. I'd like to start off with this ridiculous name for a piece of legislation. It's an ongoing fault of this government that they don't seem to be able to call things right. Why don't you simply call it the "managing clean energy benefit, OMERS and WSIB responsibility act"? That way, at least any member of public would have a marginal clue about what this bill intends to do, although, as is usually the case, the myriad of provisions make it a difficult slog even for those who are familiar with the all-encompassing legislation.

The area particularly to my interest, the WSIB, is specifically about the unfunded liability. This is a significant issue and one that requires micro-examination by the many organizations representing injured workers who understand, at the front-line level, the impact of recommendations. The Ontario NDP proposed an Ontario retirement plan, one that addressed many of the Arthurs expert commission's—appointed by the government, by the way—recommendations on pensions, a retirement plan that would address the concerns of 65% of Ontarians who do not have a workplace pension plan. The plan would work very similarly to the Canada pension plan and has several publicly managed pension plans ready to manage it. Using the CPP payroll deduction mechanism would maximize simplicity and minimize costs. Contributions to the Ontario plan would be collected using the same mechanism used to deduct CPP contributions. The Ontario retirement plan investment function would operate at arm's-length from the government as an expert entity similar to the CPP investment board, which invests

a portion of the Canada pension plan. It would have sufficient scale to operate at low unit costs, therefore benefiting plan members. But the government has failed to recognize the simple, clear-cut system that could be implemented quite quickly. This government seems to think that the large insurance companies and banks would be better managers. Well, I'm telling you, the insurance companies and big banks certainly haven't helped me over my last 59 years. In fact, I'm always paying service charges and I'm always getting milked and even my investments are going down instead of up, so I'm not quite sure I want those guys managing it. That would only ensure more fees taken directly out of my pension plan, not in any way in the best interests of plan members.

One of the most significant recommendations that the NDP made on the Arthurs expert commission recommendations was an Ontario pension agency. This agency would take pension plans that have been stranded or left without a plan manager when a company declares bankruptcy. Nortel and AbitibiBowater are recent examples of pension plans that have been left stranded. The lack of support from this government for the Nortel disabled retirees, who right now need the government to ensure that their lawyer is able to get the transcripts of the most recent court decisions so that they can craft an appeal—their pleas have fallen on the deafened ears of this government.

I want to quote to you from an email received in our offices pleading for help to get the transcripts before the end of November so that an appeal can be properly filed:

"The Nortel disabled bankruptcy court case was heard in Toronto in Judge Morawetz's courtroom twice in 2010: March 3 to 5, 2010, and September 29 and 30 and October 1, 2010. The disabled retirees have been trying to get the transcripts of these proceedings. Numerous phone calls have been made but with no success, so they have resorted to written records. To date, the transcripts have not been received. For obvious reasons, most of the disabled were unable to attend the court proceedings. In some cases, written affidavits were submitted to the court and at the September hearing. These individuals were conferenced by telephone; however, video conferencing was declined by the courts.

"The Ontario disabilities act of 2005 requires accessibility and/or accommodation to be made for the disabled. Although the attachments explain in detail the nature and extent their disability, the fact is they have been deemed disabled by Sun Life and, in most cases, by the CPP plan and therefore we are only requesting that an intent of the Ontario disabilities act be administered accordingly."

Not exactly fair; very, very badly handled.

In addition, these individuals cannot afford to travel and also cannot afford the outrageous 50 cents per page to secure the documents for themselves. They have to pay 50 cents for a page to read about how they're basically being screwed out of their pensions; pretty sad when you've got to pay to know the bad news.

Documents from parliamentary discussions are available within 12 to 24 hours, and the fact that the disabled have been advised that the requested documentation is not available for a minimum of six weeks after a formal request is just not acceptable. These documents are necessary for the lawyer and the disabled group to make effective appeal documents by November 30, 2010. I think that's tomorrow. I guess they're out of luck.

Not only did they not get co-operation from the justice minister, they didn't get co-operation from the courts, they didn't get co-operation from the people who have the files and wouldn't release them so they could mount a defence. These are individuals who face poverty on January 1, 2011, when their disability benefits coverage will end—didn't even get a chance, didn't get their day in court, didn't even get a chance to defend themselves, didn't even get a chance to receive the documents so they could mount a proper defence.

You should also note that the earliest written request for the information was dated October 13, 2010, which exceeds the six weeks' notification requirement. Given this information, I am requesting answers to (1) why have the requests for the court transcripts not been accommodated, and (2) why is it that the federal Hansard transcripts can be obtained the day of the committee hearings but court transcripts take six weeks after the initial request? You can get the Hansard transcripts from Parliament the next day but you've got to wait six weeks to get the transcripts from the initial request. If they can get it out in one day, why does it take six weeks to get to these disabled people?

1700

The disabled cannot afford to pay for these documents, and their lawyer is already working pro bono. Therefore, he could hardly be expected to obtain these transcripts, and there are piles of them, at 50 cents a page. He's already working free for the disabled, and they want to charge these people 50 cents a page. Why are the disabled not being given accessibility or accommodation to the documents in a timely manner in order to examine and make an appeal to the courts?

What a disturbing story, and this government has turned away from their pleas. We have written to the minister's staff, asking that they help, but after four workdays—four workdays—we still haven't had an answer, and these disabled workers are still being treated badly by the government.

The creation of the Ontario pension agency would have saved these injured pensioners from the extreme stress of this whole court process and the fight for their basic right to get the court transcripts in a timely and cost-affordable way. This government should be ashamed of the callous response to these Ontarians who have contributed so much to our economy over the good years and who are now cast aside in lean times.

The decision to hire Dr. Arthurs to head the funding review of the WSIB unfunded liability is good, but I fear that all his good work may fall on the same deafened Liberal ears that his good work fell on for pensions. Dr.

Arthurs will be looking at time limits to fully fund the WSIB, as well as the many issues related to the unfunded liability. But if the same types of forces that swayed the government to ignore many of Dr. Arthurs's excellent recommendations on the pension file are pushing their own agenda on this file, we can expect even more ignored recommendations. We have to fear the possible impact on benefits and whether the opposing forces are able to convince this government to reduce this in any way.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's getting a little loud, Speaker. You told me to be quiet a little earlier.

But the thing that is most offensive is that we are here, 15 years after the WSIB was re-created as an insurance system rather than a workers' compensation system, and this government hasn't done one thing to fix that basic problem. That any injured worker is fearful of contacting this organization that was created to protect employers from being sued by their employees who are injured on the job is wrong to the core—wrong to the core. That workers injured on the job with no doubt at all that the injury was caused solely on the job are refused their claim is absolutely unacceptable.

I heard one such case of a teacher whose student grabbed her arm and twisted it up her back, causing a rotator cuff injury, and her claim was denied. How can that be? How can this system reject the claims of injured workers when there are witnesses that the injury was completely a result of performing their work duties?

It's cases like this that have injured workers' groups demonstrating in front of the ministry annually. They'll be out again on December 3, standing in front of the ministry, falling on deaf ears. The minister will come out and speak and promise them they're working on it, and the head of the WSIB will come out and talk about how wonderful a job he's doing. But why are those people out there for 20 years, every year, in the freezing cold, standing in front of that building, asking for the elimination of experience rating, the elimination of deeming, and also to have indexing for their pensions, when they're living on pensions from 15—they get a lousy 1%, Speaker. You try and live on that. All they hear are platitudes from the talking heads who spew the party line and who seem to have no real sympathy, compassion, understanding or drive to fix an obviously gravely flawed system.

I guess that's why they have appointed Mr. Arthurs and all these experts, because they finally realized that the system is pathetic. It was meant to help workers, but they've put up roadblocks. They've put up adjudicators who attack—attack—the workers rather than help them. This whole system was put in place so workers could not sue businesses. It was an insurance plan. It's like any other insurance company nowadays: You have to fight them to get what you're entitled to.

Although I'm very happy that Dr. Arthurs has been given the task of figuring out the unfunded liability, I believe that we should be taking a far broader approach

on WSIB. We need to look at how the system is failing injured workers in every area, and we need to start the process by returning to a workers' compensation system, casting away completely the insurance-based system that works to refuse injured workers' claims rather than to work through the system with them to ensure that they are fully compensated, retrained and re-employed wherever possible.

Another part of this complex, multi-faceted piece of legislation is the changes to the Ontario Securities Commission. The bill will give the OSC the power to force derivatives traders to register with the OSC, thereby bringing a bit more transparency to this piece of the system. This would, if implemented and regulated correctly, provide the mandate to move ahead with the creation of an Ontario-based system to trade and clear over-the-counter derivatives, but we need to monitor very closely how the regulations to this legislation are written, as they are not subject to public scrutiny before becoming effective.

Once again, when they legislate this type of legislation, they certainly are not going to favour the big banks and insurance companies, I hope. I'm not quite sure that's the way it is, because I do believe that one of the members over there wanted to bring a bill forward for insurance companies to handle pension plans. That would be real interesting: billions of dollars coming out of the plan and going to private industries. Wonderful.

They are not subject to public scrutiny before becoming effective—they could weaken the impact of these changes to favour the banks, which are notoriously against regulation. Ontario is not unique in this action, as security regulators across the country are working on a registration plan, with Quebec as the lead regulator on derivatives.

The G20 mandated that member countries move derivatives trading onto the exchange floor and clear them in the central systems by the end of 2012. With the Bank of Canada and the six largest Canadian banks working on clearing this problem, we can expect that there will be some influence from this group on how the regulations are worded and implemented. We can be sure—absolutely positive—they'll have a big say in how this goes down. I'm not quite sure how many people from the public sector will be invited.

On another front, Ontario is moving to regulate credit rating agencies, although this legislation is not strong in this area. To really protect consumers, credit rating agencies should be legally liable for getting a rating wrong. They should also be liable for containing incorrect information on an individual which can only be corrected by the organization that provided it in the first place—interesting. If one wants to check their credit rating, they are required to provide personal information that the credit rating agency may not already have. Big Brother is watching you, but you're going to provide all the information that they haven't got so they can do their job and you end up getting a poor credit rating. That's wonderful; give them more information to lower your

credit rating. Individuals should be able to keep additional or new personal information out of this record and should be able to access the information easily.

At least one of these credit rating agencies is owned by a private—I repeat, private—US company, so that our credit information could become available to foreigners without our knowledge and not necessarily with our prior approval. We should be making efforts to control this kind of personal information and to give consumers a much stronger hand in the use of their credit and corollary personal information.

One of the most invasive and offensive uses of the credit rating agency is by insurance companies, which use it to determine the rate of a household insurance. Although they are not permitted to use a credit rating to determine the premium for auto insurance in Ontario, they are able to get the information when offering an umbrella-type policy where auto and home insurance are grouped for a premium discount. This simply allows the large insurance companies to collect personal and credit information which could, without one's knowledge, be applied to both premiums. If this government had actually wanted to protect consumers' interests, they would move quickly to forbid any access to credit ratings for any insurance in this province.

This is so wrong in any case, but it is particularly wrong during a time when we have businesses closing down, an escalating jobless rate and pensioners suffering due to companies closing and their pensions being left stranded. This is the time when Ontarians should be able to turn to their government to protect and help them through a crisis. This bill does not stand up for Ontarians in that way and in other ways they so desperately need. This bill does not cut it.

This government's clean energy benefit is a pathetic attempt to buy votes from Ontarians before they are hit with the full impact of the increasing hydro rates and the excessive HST on hydro. This increased cost will hit all hydro consumers except for the larger users, who will be benefiting from changes in the global adjustment formula—I haven't heard that one before: the global adjustment formula—for businesses.

1710

The NDP has taken the position that the HST should be removed from all hydro bills, that this government must protect everyday, low-use hydro users, not give deals to larger users. They're taking it from the little guy, giving it to the big guy and hammering the little guy again.

Our movement to remove the HST from hydro bills is receiving widespread support across this province. As noted in the latest polls, 76% of Ontarians want a change in government. They want a different government. It went up to 82% who say that they're moving in the wrong direction. But this government steadfastly spews a line that you'll be better off in Ontario—when you haven't got a place to live, you can't turn on your lights and you can't eat.

We receive email every day from yet another Ontarian whose hydro bill is reaching the point where they won't

be able to pay it. This is frightening when we are at the beginning of a time when many Ontarians who do not have access to natural gas or propane must use electricity to heat their homes. What do they do to protect their family from the cold and still be able to feed them? I don't know. They've got a real job on their hands trying to feed their families with these rising costs.

There's no answer from this government. They bellow the party line and leave Ontarians to fend for themselves. I will continue with my NDP colleagues to stand up for Ontarians and fight for those changes that will make life more affordable for the people of Ontario, create more jobs for the working people of Ontario and stop removing what little they have left in their wallets with these crazy systems that they want to put in.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I found that dissertation really enlightening from a member who supports the party that brought in the Friedland formula, which attacked injured workers in a way that none of us could ever imagine.

Mr. Paul Miller: I wasn't here then.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Oh, you weren't here then, so you're not associated with what your people did before. That's amazing. It's the sort of thing that you normally would hear.

What is this bill really about? He wants the HST taken off electricity. That would take 8% off. This bill takes 10% off. Right? That's right. So 10% off your bill. You want the HST—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would you stop the clock for a minute, please? I would ask the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—he had his chance to speak; he's listening to the comments and questions.

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: They were yelling and screaming when I was talking. I think it should be on both sides. If you're going to reprimand me, reprimand them, too.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. I'm quite capable of chairing without your help.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Apparently, I've touched a chord.

My constituents appreciate this bill. This bill brings a 10% reduction off your electricity bill, even including the taxes. It includes the taxes.

Starting on the first of January, consumers will see bills that are down a net 10%. That's important to the people I represent. The folks I represent across northern Ontario who will be receiving—if they qualify, and most will—a \$200-per-family benefit for the northern energy credit, will also see a 10% reduction right on the bill. You'll never have to pay. You don't have to apply for it; it just takes 10% right off.

That is of help, and I think the people on my side of the House are going to support this. I want the member to

tell us whether he's going to support this bill. I think he's going to stand up and vote for it, unless he decides not to appear. I am delighted to be in a position to stand up here, talk straight and tell the people that I will be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I would never fault the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for standing up for injured workers. That's one of his main fortes as a former member of the Steelworkers at a steel plant. He knows of what he speaks.

I think there's really something important on that WSIB file; very few members on the other side have read this, I'm sure. Under schedule 21—people should be aware of what it does. Under the assumption of liability, which is \$12 billion, which isn't tied to the government—that's in addition to the debt and deficit of \$20 billion—there's a provision under future liabilities actuarially for them to fund the number of people who are injured, who have accidents, whether they're a FEL award or a NEL award, and cost those actuarially into the future, and they haven't been doing it. Mr. Mahoney—I am so disappointed in the current board there, but that's another debate.

What they're saying here is the future benefits; that's the change. What this means—because there's not one nickel of provincial money in the WSIB. It's an independent agency of the government. However, where their revenue comes from is the worker and the jobs.

This is another subtle tax on jobs. That's what it is. It absolves the government, in section 21, of any future liabilities. Periodically, governments used to intervene for the plight of injured workers and fund them up. I think a lot of members over there haven't got the foggiest idea—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Oh, no, no.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it's true. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin probably doesn't know. I'll tell you right now, he should read the section.

But the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek stood and made the argument, very accurately so, I think, about trust. I think that was ultimately the general theme that I kept hearing of the government's plan on energy and a number of things.

The 10% reduction is just a promise of your own money back. That's all it is.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and I've listened to some of the comments that are being made here on the government side about what he had to say. Quite frankly, he talked about affordability. He talked about energy costs. He talked about affordability and everything that was related to that. He talked about pensions and the WSIB, in fact, issues on which he has enormous passion. We know that over the years from watching him: He has enormous passion on those issues.

He pointed out quite correctly that bills are going to go up some 43% in the next five years. Yes, there is the 10%, and I think he talked about the 10%. But we as New Democrats don't think that that 10% is going to do it. Is it more than the 8% that you'd have taken off the HST? Yes, it is.

But the HST is likely to be permanent, and this bill that is being passed, that you're asking to us to pass, is for one year only—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Five years.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's five years, but it can be taken away at the stroke of a pen, without the say-so of this House. It has been opined that should the Liberals not win the next election, which is a very likely outcome, this is gone.

I think this is what he was trying to say. I would ask the members opposite, look in this House. I look at it every day: There's an eagle up there telling me to always be vigilant, but there is an owl looking at you to tell you to always be wise. You cannot be wise when you're attempting to shout down a man who is speaking to you with passion. You cannot be wise when you are rejecting every single argument that comes from this side of the House. If you want to do your job right, please look at that owl from time to time and do the job right. He has a lot to say, and he should have been heard.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I look to the eagle, and I look to the owl, and I ask if either one of them has a copy of the NDP's energy plan, because I certainly don't.

I know that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek speaks with passion about how many ways he and his party or the party opposite will reduce everybody's costs. Frankly, I don't know why they're only reducing them a little, because if all you're ever talking about are cost reductions, why don't they eliminate all the costs?

But we all know that the net effect of our energy plan is a 3.6% increase each year for the next five years for consumers. That's if you consume the same amount of energy that you are now. It doesn't even speak about decreases from further conservation.

So the real question is to compare what they're going to do with 3.6%. Everybody wants to know what they're going to do, so what are they going to do? Are they going to bring in more coal? We don't know, but we're waiting to hear. Are they going to shut down power so that nobody has the lights on in their houses in the evening or on weekends? Well, we don't know.

I look to the eagle and I look to the owl and I say, where is this plan? Where is the plan? Share just a page, maybe two pages with us. It would be so helpful if we could see. Are they going to do more nuclear? Are they going to do more wind? Are they going to do more solar? Are they going to do less? Oh, we'd so much like to know. But how do we know what the cost will be if they won't tell us anything about the plan? I tell you, this plan must simply be blowing in the wind.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: Some people use shovels; other people use front-end loaders.

Anyway, the bottom line here is that that was very passionate speech from that minister over there. But you know what? What he doesn't tell you is that they give half measures to all bills they bring in here and then they say, "Well, your party voted against it," because it isn't enough for what the people need, and they'll say, "Oh, you're going to support this." Certainly we're going to support a 10% rebate, but it falls way short of what you should have done.

You want a conservation plan? Well, you're going to see one. The minister is going to see a conservation plan. Maybe he'd like to look at what happened in California. In California, which he didn't pay attention to, they've reduced their energy costs by 40% with retrofitting, with conservation, not building new nuclear plants, overruns. They're not doing that.

This minister is doing gestures. He's not paying attention. He's being silly as usual. That's fine, because you know what? He doesn't want to hear our answers because our answers are going to embarrass you and our your government. That's why in 2011 the people of Ontario will have woken up, smelled the roses, and you'll be gone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In the hopes that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is finished his speech, we will continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Obviously, everybody brings a certain amount of passion, brings a certain amount of philosophical outlook and philosophical ideology to the debate when you're talking about the economic affairs of the province. Everybody will have their own ideas. Everybody will have things that are unique to their party that they think are important. As I said earlier, it's a matter of the sorts of choices that you're prepared to make on behalf of Ontarians.

I often think that we judge the real value of a government on how it handles things when times get tough. I think the sign of leadership is when a government is able to steer its jurisdiction through times when—the economy obviously goes through cycles, and often those cycles include some good times and often they include some bad times. You really test the mettle of the government when the economy is going through some bad

times. I think for most of us what we've witnessed in the past few years is probably a downturn in the economy unlike anything we've ever seen in our lifetimes, certainly in my lifetime. I've heard about other recessions and depressions in the past from people who are older than I am, but I've never experienced them first-hand.

Certainly, it has an impact on your community; it has an impact on the jurisdiction that you have the privilege to govern, and you have to make choices. The choice that Ontario has made, and the choice that the McGuinty government has made, is that it is intent on bringing this province of Ontario out of the recession much stronger than we went in. I think some of the measures that have been implemented during these times are an indication that we're serious about that, that we think it's achievable, that we think we can make progress as we come out of a recession, as we deal, obviously, with an increasingly global economy, deal with emerging economies like China and India. We need to be seen as world leaders and we need to do things within our own economy, within the legislation that we pass within this Legislature, that are going to equip our young people with the tools they need to compete in that global economy as we move forward. So it's not surprising that you would see, despite every reason for not doing it, that we've invested in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. As I said earlier this afternoon, any educator worth his or her salt around the globe will tell you that if you invest in young people early in their lives, it's going to pay off in huge dividends in the future. It's going to set those young people up for the sort of success that you need in an information-based society.

When times have turned tough in the past, you've seen a variety of choices employed by other governments, so it's no surprise today that you'll hear a variety of opinions from all the parties. But let's look at what has happened in the past; let's look at things that have happened in the past.

Let's go back to the previous government. The PC government had a fire sale of Highway 407. It left us in a state where the province now, because of contractual reasons, has no approval rights with respect to fee increases. The private company that's operating the highway can increase fees pretty well to the point that it sees fit. Ontario is a province, as a result of the deal that was struck by the previous government, that has no ongoing revenues that come in from that highway. The PC government of the past failed to negotiate any participation rights in that agreement.

At the same time, when times were relatively good compared to what we've seen in previous years, the previous government managed to add billions of dollars to Ontario's debt. They hid a deficit from us. Obviously, we all know that. We had quite the debate in the House about that: \$5.6 billion, hidden. There's a deficit in the province of Ontario today, but it's out in the open. We're able to debate it; we're able to talk about it. Ontarians know about it. It hasn't been hidden.

What isn't often mentioned is that under the previous government, Ontario had the highest-ever accumulated-

deficit-to-GDP ratio in its history. That seems to be forgotten often in the comments that are made.

I know at that point in my life I was serving as a regional councillor, as a town councillor, trying to keep the essential services in the town of Oakville and the region of Halton going, but dealing with provincial downloading—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Kevin, tell us about downloading.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Downloading? I mean, the Conservative government were the masters of downloading, believe me. They followed the slash-and-burn approach when it came to hospitals, when it came to schools. They had neighbourhoods having battles with each other on a regular basis as to which school would stay open, which school would close. My own hospital was badly in need of expansion. It simply couldn't get the approval from that government to do anything about it.

Today, we have the opportunity to follow a number of paths in order to bring the Ontario economy back to where it should be. I think that by any objective analysis, you can look to the job creation, the replacement of jobs that have come as a result of actions that have been made by our government, the McGuinty government. You'll see in the United States, our neighbouring jurisdiction, they've managed to recover about 10% of the jobs they had when they were going into the recession. In the province of Ontario, with 12.5 million of us, we've managed to recover 75% of those jobs.

So when you compare two jurisdictions that are quite similar to each other, neighbouring states and provinces that deal with each other, that trade with each other, that share a common border, and you look at the way that we've handled our economy here in the province of Ontario and you look at what's happened in the United States, I think anybody, by any objective analysis, would say that we're doing quite well in Ontario compared to other jurisdictions.

Also, I come from Oakville, obviously. The member mentioned that it's been decided that a site that had been previously picked by the Ontario Power Authority to put in a natural gas power plant will not be moving ahead, and that's wonderful news for the people in my community. I think it's wonderful news to anybody in a local community that believes in local democracy and in people coming forward and being able to talk to their government and being listened to.

But times weren't always rosy for Oakville. Oakville, as you'll know, is the home of the head office of Ford of Canada. It's also the assembly plant for a number of vehicles that are selling very, very well. But you have to go back to the days of 2008 and 2009, and you have to think how important the auto industry is to the province of Ontario. Economists and experts in the auto industry will tell you on a pretty regular basis that for every one job you create on the auto assembly line, you create between six and seven in the community. So when you get 2,000 or 3,000 jobs in an assembly plant, say for example, in Woodstock or a GM plant in Oshawa, for

every one job you're creating on the line, you're creating another six or seven in the community.

1730

When the Fords of the world, the GMs of the world and the Chryslers of the world were going through some pretty tough times, we had a decision to make as a government, and obviously there was a difference of opinion. The Leader of the Opposition did not support the 2008-09 auto bailout. He called it corporate welfare. Think of the jobs that would have been lost had that auto pact not been supported. Think of the CAW jobs that would have been lost. Think of those well-paying jobs in the community, on the assembly line, and also think of the recovery that's been made by the auto industry as a result of strategic help by this government at the right time. Certainly when you look at Ford in my community, it's doing extremely well. You look at GM in Oshawa: They're starting to turn the corner. They've just entered the market again with their shares; the shares are doing quite well.

When you look at Ford, for example—at one point I think Ford was trading at \$1.50 a share; the last time I looked, it was somewhere between \$12 and \$15. That's a tremendous recovery and it means a lot to the people that work in my community.

You have to look at the conduct of the previous government. Under the Harris and the Hudak regimes, there was no new auto investment in Ontario during that entire period. They failed to attract a single auto plant to this province. One single auto plant—they couldn't get one of the auto manufacturers to come to the province of Ontario and invest, but the United States managed to get 19 during that period. What was happening in the United States that wasn't happening in Ontario during the regime of the previous government?

The productivity gap between Ontario and the United States during the period of the Mike Harris era under the Tory government doubled. Farmers lost their livelihood. We talk about the agricultural sector. During the last five years of that government, over 1,000 farmers per year lost their farms. There was a decline of 25% of all jobs in agriculture in this province, and that was during good times.

So now here we are faced with some challenging times in the province of Ontario, and what we don't want to see is a repeat of the past. We don't want to see closing hospitals. People tell me that. People in my community, people around the province of Ontario, will tell you that one of the things they value most about Ontario and about this country, Canada, is that the health care system that we have here looks after you based on how sick you are, not on how rich you are; based on how much you need their services, not how much money you're able to pay.

We're not going to fire nurses like the previous government. What we've been able to do instead, through strategic moves and strategic legislation, is cut drug prices in half in the province of Ontario, so that now people in Ontario only have to pay half the price they

paid before, or the province of Ontario itself only has to pay half the price it paid before to drug companies.

Wait times, certainly in my own community and around the province, when you look at a variety of surgeries and procedures, are down, in some cases quite dramatically. You look at MRIs, you look at surgeries, you look at the wait times in emergency rooms, which once were escalating at a pretty dramatic pace, and you see that they've come down as well.

Certainly in Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, which is a hospital that will be closed in the next few years as we open a brand new one at Dundas and Third Line in Oakville, a brand new, state-of-the-art hospital to replace one that served the community very well but simply got too small and simply didn't have the room to expand—that hospital is going through its RFP stage, and a decision will be made on who will be building that hospital within the next few months.

What we were able to do was we were able to keep people working. Today, I had the pleasure of announcing in Oakville, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation, that we've just opened—anybody who drives through Oakville, anybody who's going west tonight will drive and see that we've opened 16 kilometres, just this morning, of HOV lanes right throughout the community of Oakville. That's going to be excellent for the environment. It's going to allow for more emission-free travel. It's going to make GO Transit more efficient. Those people who want to do their part and carpool will now be able to carpool and move through Oakville. Certainly, anybody who travels from Toronto to Hamilton will know that that's been a challenge. This is going to help quite significantly.

We twinned the bridges over Sixteen Mile Creek, twinned the bridges over Bronte Creek, spent \$380 million on improving transportation throughout the western GTA, and there's a lot more to come. And what did that do? That allowed the building trades to keep working. That allowed the suppliers of the asphalt, the concrete, the tools, the heavy equipment and organizations such as the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793, which is in my riding—that's allowed their members to keep working through some of the tougher times that we've faced as an economy.

Previous governments, as I said, added billions of dollars to Ontario's debt during good times. They hid a deficit from Ontarians in their 2003 budget, and it wasn't until later that they were forced to admit that they actually, in good times, managed to run the government into \$5.6 billion of more debt.

The NDP government didn't fare much better, but you have to go back some years to 1993. It probably would be unfair to the two members who are in the House, because obviously they will tell us that they weren't here in 1993. But you do go back and you see public sector wage cuts, which this government has decided is a road they're not going to travel; we have implemented a freeze on civil service wages, a pay freeze in the province of Ontario. We agree it's the right thing to do. They almost

doubled the province's debt in five years and they carried four straight deficits. That's something that I don't think Ontarians want to see.

When you look at the progress we've made in the province of Ontario, there are more young people participating, as I said earlier, in post-secondary education than anywhere else in the western world, right here in Ontario. We see some of the initiatives we're making now on clean air: You see us starting to close down the coal plants, see that we're starting to look at airsheds and air zones and ways that we can reduce the asthma rates for our young people in Ontario.

We know that people are suffering. We know that people are going through some tough times and we know that this is a time when they need their government most to assist them. So what we've done for business, in order to help them create jobs, is we've asked them if they will invest in Ontario. One of the reasons that we're saying they should invest in Ontario and we're seeing them invest in Ontario is that we enjoy the lowest corporate income tax in all of the country; we've got the lowest provincial personal income taxes in the country. In fact, when it comes to corporate taxes now, we've got the lowest corporate taxes in all of North America.

I think, all in all, you're going to hear a variety of opinions as to what should be done, as to what are the best things to do to move this province through some of the troubling times that we've seen in the past. You have to look at, I think, if you're going to be consistent. I'm just going to use a few quotes. Somebody very recently said, "We understand how that (single sales tax) can help the economy." That was Tim Hudak.

He says also, "I agree that there's little sense in allowing two separate governments to apply two separate taxes and policies and collect two separate group of sales taxes." That was Tim Hudak talking to the Economic Club of Toronto in 2009. We're still not sure if he's going to commit to repealing the HST, if he's going to keep the HST; we're still not sure about that because, as a previous speaker said, there doesn't appear to be any plan, just a lot of statements that don't really add up to much.

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Now, the NDP, I think, still has a request in to the Premier, unless they've taken that request away, asking if the Premier would raise the provincial sales tax by 1%, which would be a \$2-billion tax hike. I'm assuming they don't want to do that anymore. I'd like to hear somebody say that they don't want to raise the provincial sales tax by 1%. I don't think that would be a good idea. I can't help but think that the NDP doesn't think that would be a good idea, either.

But we still haven't heard anybody from either side, and certainly they've had their opportunities. Are you going to repeal the HST? It's a simple yes or no. "Yes, we are." "No, we're not." They've been asked over and over again. The media is asking over and over again, "What are you going to do? What's going to be in your platform? Are you going to repeal the HST?" Tim Hudak

was in favour of it the last time I looked. It seems to me that, suddenly, he seems to be in favour of the HST. I have no idea where the NDP stands on the HST, and I'm not sure if the NDP knows where they stand on the HST.

It's going to be interesting as these parties are forced to account. These parties have to come forward with plans. The media and the people of Ontario are starting to ask, "What is your plan?" It's very easy to stand here and say, "Well, I don't like that. I don't like this. I don't like that." Sometimes you get called to account. Sometimes you've got to stand up and say, "I believe in this."

If the NDP achieves official party status or we have to change the rules again—I'm not sure; I don't know what official party status will be. It appears to be whatever number of seats the NDP gets becomes official party status.

So as I said, there's going to be a variety of opinions expressed. It's a lot of fun. It's a lot of fun when you listen to the NDP try to present itself as a serious party and get laughed out of town. Every election time, they get their hopes up, and then every election time, they come in here in the single digits. It's just kind of sad to see that, but—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Hamilton East.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think I'm done here, Speaker. It's been a pleasure to speak for 20 minutes. I look forward to responding.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was hoping the member would continue. He's starting to back up his remarks and sort of retreat.

And if I recall, some time ago, the member from Oakville—truly a very nice person, having served as regional councillor and that. I thought for sure that he was going to actually take a run at a senior job there in the region, but as it turned out—now, he did run at one time, as you would know, for the NDP.

Interjection: He was an NDP?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. He actually has quite a long and convoluted history in his—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Why don't you explain it for us? Tell us more about it.

Mr. John O'Toole: He saw the light, but actually I think he was dazzled by the light.

But he was saying this: He was asking a lot of questions of what we'd do. In his remarks, he was saying, "What would the NDP do, and what would the Conservatives do?" He's training to be in opposition, because, actually, after October, they get to ask the questions.

In all fairness, those are fair questions, but you should keep in mind that you've had seven years—

Mr. Robert Bailey: And you didn't get it done.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and you didn't get it done. Not only that, in seven years—and you have to ask yourself, how is it? How are you doing?

I've said it before, and I think it's worth repeating: The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. And what have they done? They've broken promises, raised taxes and pretty well ruined the energy system, as well as other—now, to be fair, they have done a few things rather decently. But, look, practise up on asking questions, because that's going to be your role in the next year or so. As a respectable member, I think you've sort of run out of ideas, and that's forgivable. Look, you've had seven years. I understand you've hit the wall.

They're flailing for ideas. I expect the NDP will come up with some really good ideas for you, because you probably heard them when you ran for them the last time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as always, to the member from Oakville. He talks about his party planning all this energy for the future, but I remember, just six months ago in this House, member after member—the Premier, the finance minister, the energy minister—all of them standing in their place and talking about the dire necessity of having a gas plant in Oakville and how the whole place was going to fall apart unless we got this gas plant in Oakville.

I remember the member from Oakville being so upset about this. He packed the whole place with his friends to try to say, "No, no, it wasn't me; it wasn't my party. Honest, it wasn't us."

Oh yes, then they had to bring in Erin Brockovich to tell the government what they needed to do. And now the government announces to much fanfare, "We don't need the gas plant in Oakville. We never needed the gas plant in Oakville because we have enough energy."

This is the same government today, which has enough energy, that is trying to say, "We need \$87 billion worth of new nuclear stuff." This is a government that admitted, after six months, that they hugely overestimated what they needed; they didn't need Oakville at all. They needed to listen to people like Erin Brockovich.

And there you've got this member who's still on that sort of time warp where he's talking about, "We need all this energy." Hasn't he learned the lesson? Haven't the people of Oakville and the people of Ontario learned the lesson? The lesson is, all these people who are talking about this overwhelming need for energy are overestimating it. It probably is not necessary.

I ask the member from Oakville, and I hope he will explain it in his two minutes, what is so different today that we need \$87 billion worth, but we can spend hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars to get out of the Oakville gas plant contract?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I certainly think that this is a lively debate. I just wanted to add the fact that we sometimes forget, in our macro look at this, our micro interests, and those are our own communities.

I just want to talk about the economy of Toronto. I know that we sometimes forget that if local economies

don't work, provincial and national economies don't work. I would think that, in this very challenging period economically, we've been very fortunate in the city of Toronto that our major industries are still vibrant. I know that our financial services industry, despite the massive meltdown on Wall Street, because we've got good rules in our financial services here in Ontario, the Ontario Securities Commission and our banking act here in Canada, has been able to stand pretty strong through this incredibly tumultuous time.

I know that our construction industry in Toronto, the men and women in my riding who work on construction, have been very fortunate. They've been able to keep their jobs, and that's thanks to the provincial government's partnership with the federal government and the stimulus program. We've had a lot of roads repaired, a lot of bridges repaired. We've had housing built. Also, the private sector has been quite buoyant through these very turbulent times. If you look at Liberty Village in Toronto, for instance, which is an old derelict area that used to have all kinds of empty plants, there are about 20 cranes in the skies there. People are building houses and condos, which is good.

Again, these are troubled times. So as much as we would like to castigate each other—and obviously, it is the job of opposition to castigate the government—there are some good things happening in this great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd just like to take up where the member from Eglinton—Lawrence left off when he talks about castigation. There's lots to castigate about.

I listened very carefully to the member from Oakville's comments, and I very much enjoyed them. He got on there about back in the 1990s. If I recall right, it was Paul Martin who was cutting transfer payments to the provinces that led to these cutbacks. Actually, the provincial government of the day was investing in health care, and it was Paul Martin who actually cut transfer payments. But anyway, that's a debate for another day. We won't get into that right now; we've got lots of other things today to talk about. I look forward to this debate as well.

I must have different constituents in my riding, because I'll tell you, the people I hear from back in my riding are concerned about these higher energy prices and the HST. They're telling me that they don't believe in these high-priced contracts that they've signed with these green energy companies, the Samsung deal that was done in secret. We can't find out any of the details about it. Among the myriad deals and obfuscation that were done, I keep referring back to that Sussex strategy, Sussenomics, that we were fortunate to have access to. I look at everything through the prism of this Sussex strategy, where it said that the first order of business would be to confuse, obfuscate and drag a red herring across the trail when people were trying to understand what the costs were, what the benefits to this Green Energy Act were. We

don't even hear anybody talk about the Green Energy Act anymore. Now it's clean energy. We went from green to clean.

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Anyway, I look forward to that debate. I'm sure there are other members who would like to add to that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oakville has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to respond. Certainly I enjoyed some of the comments. Some of them I'd almost agree with; some of them I think are basically fairy tales.

As I said earlier, it's a matter of the choices you make. When GM was in trouble—this would be for the member from Durham. I know as a former employee of GM, he knows what a proud history that company has in our province. He knows what it means to his community. He knows what it means to the province of Ontario. So when his leader called assistance to them corporate welfare, I didn't hear him do it publicly, but I bet behind closed doors he took his leader to task. I bet he told Mr. Hudak, "Don't do that to my community. My community needs help. GM's going to pull through this somehow. If they get some help, if they get a little bit of help, they're going to make themselves a healthy company again and keep hiring people in my community." I don't know that that conversation took place, but I'm hoping it did. I'll put my faith in the member that that is actually what happened.

Also, when people at the Ford plant and people at the Chrysler plant needed help, they looked to this government for assistance and this government responded to save those jobs. It responded to the point that Buzz Hargrove, I believe—I don't know if he was kicked out of the NDP or he left the NDP. I'm not sure exactly what happened to Buzz Hargrove, if he left on his own or he was asked to leave, but certainly Buzz Hargrove is a man I respect. I think he understands this province, I think he understands what it means to save jobs, and I think he understands what it means to invest strategically in industries like the auto business. Certainly I don't think he was very happy with what the NDP was doing, and I'd always seen the CAW and the NDP as very strong allies. Obviously, the NDP was up to something that the CAW didn't like.

I think we're on the right track. I think the other parties maybe have different ideas, but I think we're taking Ontario down the right—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise before the House today to speak to Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. In particular, I would like to speak to schedule 13, the so-called Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010.

This omnibus bill is just another in a long string of omnibus bills that this government has introduced. It looks to amend 21 separate pieces of legislation in one fell swoop. Many of these amendments are highly technical,

and rather than debate them individually, they have been presented in a single piece of legislation.

This bill diverts attention from the real issue, that the fall economic statement is just further proof of the McGuinty government's fiscal mismanagement.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you. The member from Durham's coaching me here, so I'll take his advice.

Expert economists have judged Dalton McGuinty as the worst fiscal manager amongst all the Premiers. That's not my judgment. That's fiscal judgements from across the province and across the country.

Ontario's real per capita GDP has declined by 8% since 2000. Meanwhile, the McGuinty Liberals spend \$2.1 million more every hour than they collect in revenue. Don't trust that the McGuinty government won't use the provisions of this bill to raise taxes further.

Despite many different issues tackled in this bill, I would like to focus on the skyrocketing hydro rates across our province. One of the things that Bill 135 aims to do is provide a 10% reduction in hydro rates. A reduction is clearly an admission that this government's green energy strategy has failed. It has failed hardworking Ontario families and failed many manufacturing companies that are leaving our province due to unaffordable hydro rates. A 10% reduction won't solve the problem when this government is committed to ever-increasing hydro rates.

Time and time again, both PC and NDP members have risen in this House and demanded that this government invest wisely in affordable, efficient and dependable energy rather than throwing the money of hardworking Ontario families away into sweetheart, sole-sourced deals like Samsung or other expensive energy experiments. When will this government make the details of the Samsung deal public?

Many hydro bills are climbing across the province. Last week, this Liberal government introduced their so-called long-term energy strategy. In this announcement, the government revealed that hydro bills paid by Ontario families and businesses are set to skyrocket 46% over the next five years; this on top of this government's 75% hydro rate hike, HST and other charges since 2003—75%. In 2003 typical family bills were \$87 a month, but after this government's 46% price hike, families could be paying as high as \$166 a month by 2015, based on current Ministry of Energy projections.

I think that the Sussex Strategy Group document was right where it said, on page 2, "In this, it will be critical"—critical—"to 'confuse' the issue in the political/public/media away from just price...." Ladies and gentlemen out there in TV land, that's on page 2 of the Sussex strategy document, which inadvertently came to us, luckily for Ontario families.

Families are near the breaking point, but instead of fixing the problem, the Premier has decided to give everyone a 10% reduction and continue on his way to further increase hydro rates; with borrowed money, I might add. They're in debt over \$20 billion and they're

going to borrow more money to give people a 10% cut. It is because my colleagues on the other side believe that money in the pockets of Ontarians is unlimited. I find it very hard to believe that they are not receiving the same types of phone calls, letters and emails that I am from seniors on fixed incomes and struggling, hardworking Ontario families. Realizing that their re-election chances are in serious jeopardy, the McGuinty Liberals announced the Ontario clean energy benefit, which will cost families \$1 billion a year in taxes instead of through their hydro bills.

These are just a number of letters that I received from my constituents, and I'm sure the government members would love to read a number of the letters they've received. Some of them are actually from their ridings.

Since this government seems unable to hear the voices of hardworking Ontario families and seniors struggling on fixed incomes to pay their McGuinty energy experiment and hydro hikes, I'd like to give them an opportunity to hear some of the hundreds of people who have written me.

A man from Brights Grove writes:

"I am writing in regard to today's debate on HST and Ontarians' hydroelectric bills.

"We're in times when the Liberal government is asking everyone to tighten their belts.

"It's hard tightening our belts when the Liberals are using that same belt around our necks to choke us.

"A former party member myself"—this is this gentleman writing—"my opinion is the HST was a burden much too huge for the Ontario people.

"I ask that you convey my concerns during debate today."

I've done that today.

Another man, from Camlachie, another small community in my riding:

"I am strongly opposed to the extra fees being applied to hydro bills. As we should all aware, since private suppliers are being paid large sums to generate electricity using wind and solar, our hydro bills are going to skyrocket—there is no question that this must happen.

The HST is only making a bad situation worse. There are people who are not going to be able to afford to use electricity as it is.

"Our hydro bills that I receive, the actual cost of electricity is less than half the bill. The rest is taxes, debt retirement, regulatory and delivery charges. It is already ridiculous and going to get worse. Is it sensible to shut down Lambton when Detroit Edison is right across the same river and does not have the scrubbing technology that OPG uses?

"As a nation we are too apathetic about things like this and I wish to speak up at this time."

This is another letter from a woman in my riding. It's addressed:

"Mr. Bailey,

"You and other politicians at Queen's Park will debate on the future of hydro bills. I urge and expect to you fight for the removal of the HST from hydro bills. Furthermore, you can push to get rid of the smart meters as well. That is another ridiculous cash grab. The Ontario government taxes us enough already and should not be in the business of punishing us for using energy. I know your party is for limited government and low taxes. Please prove it."

Another letter:

"I am writing to advise you of our disgust with the HST being applied to hydro bills. Once the smart meter comes into effect, the cost of hydro will increase. As the cost of hydro increases, the HST tax will be compounded. Granted, we can all do our part to use less electricity, but basically we feel that it is immoral to tax a necessity of life. Our displeasure with the Liberal government's approach to the citizens of Ontario re the HST on hydro will definitely influence how we will vote in the next Ontario election."

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. I ask the member to take a pause there. It being 6 of the clock, I declare this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 30 November 2010

Mardi 30 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2010, on the amendment to the motion relating to negotiations with the federal government on a comprehensive new agreement to provide funding, planning, and governance for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to speak on the resolution calling on our federal government to begin negotiations on a comprehensive new immigration agreement with Ontario.

The success of our newcomers is vitally important to the success of our province of Ontario. Immigration is Ontario's lifeblood. Almost half of the country's immigrants settle in Ontario. A few thousand immigrants choose to settle in my riding of Richmond Hill every year. As a result, the population of Richmond Hill has been increased from about 60,000 in 1990 to almost 200,000 in 2010. My family and I are, in fact, immigrants to Canada who moved to Richmond Hill in 1991. It's expected that the population of York region will reach 1.5 million within the next 20 years.

Newcomers are key components of our labour force growth and prosperity in Ontario. They bring a wide range of work expertise and life experience to our country. They are doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, nurses, technicians, technologists, entrepreneurs, business executives, artists, academics and workers, just to name a few. Within the next decade, newcomers will be the only source of net labour force growth in our province.

When the immigrants arrive, no matter the level of their education and work experience, family background, country of origin or ethnicity, they're all faced with the reality of life in the new land. They have to deal with numerous issues pertaining to settling down in their chosen country—their new home. That's why we need to ensure that our newcomers have the resources they need to succeed and contribute to our country.

Ottawa has signed federal-provincial immigration agreements with other provinces such as Manitoba, British Columbia and Quebec. These agreements address the unique local needs of newcomers in those provinces. Ontario's newcomers deserve a comprehensive new agreement that addresses their local needs. The McGuinty government is calling on the federal government to begin discussions immediately on a comprehensive new agreement that provides Ontario with the funding, planning and management necessary for Ontario's newcomers to succeed. I urge Ottawa to spend the remaining \$207 million promised under the first Ontario-Canada immigration agreement on services Ontario's newcomers need to succeed.

Ontario's strength and competitiveness depend on new Canadians settling in Ontario, and settling smoothly; on ensuring that they have the tools to succeed. The newcomers' success is our success, and with almost half of new immigrants to Canada settling in Ontario, this is an issue of national importance. Immigration is a key component of our labour force because newcomers will represent the only source of net labour force growth within the next decade.

Ontario's newcomers arrive with skills, talents and experience. We have an obligation to help them integrate their skills and talents into our society and our economy. By putting the skills of our newcomers to work, we are ensuring that Ontario remains strong and prosperous. The past generations of immigrants helped to build our province and our country. Today, that tradition continues. But we know that the talents of some newcomers are not being fully utilized. We need a new comprehensive agreement with the federal government to match the realities of our economy and the importance of immigrant success for Ontario's prosperity. That means funding, planning and the governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper fully.

Earlier this year, the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement expired. We have repeatedly asked the federal government to begin negotiations, but they continue to delay the discussions. We are also waiting for Ottawa to spend the remaining \$207 million that they promised to newcomers under the original agreement. That's why we are calling on the federal government to come to the table and to begin negotiations immediately on a comprehensive new agreement that ensures that Ontario immigrants have the resources they need to succeed.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, better settlement and integration of immigrants would add tens of thousands of skilled workers to the labour force,

resulting in a \$4.1-billion to \$5.9-billion boost to our national productivity and income. According to the Royal Bank of Canada, if foreign-born workers were as successful in the Canadian workforce as those born in Canada, personal income would be about \$13 billion higher each year than at present. These figures speak loudly. They tell us that every year, we are losing at least \$13 billion as a result of issues related to immigrant settlement. Spending on immigrant settlement is not an expense to our governments; in contrast, it is an investment in our people and in the future economy of our nation.

In Ontario, we are a province of 13 million people, competing in a global economy with much larger established and emerging economies. We need a long-term deal with our federal government to ensure that we provide the required services to newcomers to allow them to thrive. We need the talents of new Ontarians.

Throughout the life of the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, the federal government underspent what it promised by \$207 million. That's why we need comprehensive new arrangements to support the success of our newcomers to Ontario. Other provinces have agreements with the federal government that respond to the unique local needs of their newcomers. It's time for Ontario to get a comprehensive new agreement that benefits Ontario newcomers.

0910

Provision of settlement services to the newcomers is not all related to funding. It's about easy access and improved services for our newcomers. Under the existing system, immigrants face a patchwork of services and duplication by various government agencies. For newcomers, this can be overwhelming and confusing. Immigrants and Ontario are not being served as well as they could be by the current system. We need a comprehensive new arrangement that addresses the needs of newcomers to Ontario. The service providers delivering settlement services such as language training and other supports for immigrants are burdened by two sets of paperwork and two sets of programs for one set of people being served. This is unnecessary and unproductive. Ontario's eligibility criteria for the programs it funds are broader than the criteria of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Programs administered by the province will have blended eligibility so that those currently closed to new citizens and refugee claimants are opened.

Ontario is a destination of choice for immigrants to Canada. Almost three million immigrants have arrived in Ontario since 1980. This figure represents about half of all immigrants entering Canada during that period. In 2009, 106,867 immigrants coming to Canada landed in Ontario. This represents 42% of all immigrants to Canada.

Ontario continues to drive Canada's economy. Ontario generates 39% of the national GDP and produces 43% of total merchandise exports. Ontario is the home for almost 50% of all employees in high tech, financial services and other knowledge-intensive industries.

Successful immigrant integration is closely linked to Ontario's economic and social outcomes. Immigrants account for approximately 30% of Ontario's current labour force. In Toronto, nearly one in two—meaning 48%—of labour force participants are immigrants.

The Canada-Ontario immigration agreement was signed on November 21, 2005, and provided \$920 million in new federal funding for settlement services over a five-year period, in addition to \$540 million in base funding. A one-year extension of the agreement was announced on May 5, 2010, which commits an additional \$428 million for the year 2010-11. However, only \$713 million of the new money was spent throughout the original agreement; a shortfall of \$207 million remains.

Since 2005, the government of Ontario allocated a total of \$775 million on immigration programming. Programming includes: settlement, language training and labour market integration services. Ontario supports francophone immigrants and francophone communities by providing access to settlement services and bridge training programs in French, as well as English and French-as-a-second-language instruction, through school boards. To reaffirm Ontario's investment in immigration, the 2009 Ontario budget committed a total of \$94 million over two years to expand mentorship and bridge training support to immigrants in this province.

I urge the federal government to come to the table and negotiate a fair and comprehensive immigration settlement agreement with Ontario. The success of our newcomers is the success of our country.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning, everyone. It's nice that we see so many people here. I know some of you may have been out at subway stations today, but we're glad that you're here today.

I also want to make mention: I hope everyone had a great breakfast. We've got the egg farmers downstairs.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was good, Steve.

Mr. Steve Clark: It was wonderful. I got to talk to a young lady who I went to high school with. We were actually heads of the student council together at Thousand Islands Secondary School in Brockville.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is she Conservative as well?

Mr. Steve Clark: I think so, Rosie. Mary Jean McFall is her name, and she's with Burnbrae Farms. She just got elected to city council in Brockville.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Uh-oh.

Mr. Steve Clark: No, it's a good thing. She's going to make a great councillor, absolutely. So I want to welcome Mary Jean McFall and all of the egg farmers who provided a wonderful breakfast. I think it's just a great start to the day.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What about the new mayor in Athens? Is there a new mayor in Athens?

Mr. Steve Clark: Absolutely, there is. There is, member for Peterborough. There are a few new mayors around the province of Ontario.

I'm extremely pleased that I'm able to speak on this motion, and especially the amendment that was put for-

ward by PC leader Tim Hudak regarding the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement.

We've all heard, especially over the last week, the heckles from the government benches about asking for a plan from our party. Of course, we know why the government is looking for a plan. They're a bit worried. The Toronto Star poll shows that 76% of Ontarians want a change and, you know, folks on the other side as well are getting a little worried. There are a few of them who are even jumping ship because of the problems that we're seeing.

Mr. Jim Brownell: No, we're not.

Mr. Steve Clark: Absolutely.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Absolutely not.

Mr. Steve Clark: I think what's happening is they're desperately looking at and looking for ideas from Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak, because over the next 10 months they're going to make it their vision to twist and distort the facts coming from this side of the House.

I'm so very happy to be able to stand here today and talk about the plan that was proposed by Tim Hudak on this motion. It's a plan that amends the citizenship and immigration minister's motion, which I have to admit has some good intentions. But the problem is that, like so much of what we see on that side of the House, it's got one fundamental flaw. It's a flaw that should frighten Ontarians because if it was a movie, we'd say, "Premier, we've seen this too many times over the last seven years. We didn't like it the first few times that we saw it and we certainly don't want to see the sequel." You see, this motion that was proposed calls on the federal government to blindly hand over \$207 million to the McGuinty Liberals. The problem is, there's no plan on how to spend it and there's no plan to show Ontarians that it's working.

That's why Tim Hudak's amendment, our PC leader's amendment, adds a few key words. I'll say them slowly because I want the government to listen, because sometimes they are words that they rarely use in this House. Our PC leader Tim Hudak's amendment talks about words like "fully costed plan," "accountability" and "performance measures." In other words, before the government creates another \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle, we're demanding they present the federal government and the people of Ontario with a detailed and costed plan on how they're going to spend the \$207 million.

0920

We don't want the money going to Liberal-friendly consultants, we want it spent on settlement programs that will meet the needs of newcomers to Ontario, as well as the requirements of Ontario communities. We don't want another slushgate scandal that saw the previous citizenship and immigration minister waste \$32 million with a program that had as its main criterion who you knew within the Liberal Party. Groups weren't even applying for the money, it was getting passed out. There was no paperwork, there was no accountability. I'll remind my friends opposite about what the Auditor General had to say about that particular plan. Remember what he said? He called the oversight, "the worst that we've ever seen."

Instead of using that money to help newcomers to Ontario realize the dreams that brought them here with their families, the money went to the government's friends—people with connections. What a terrible lesson for any resident of this province, particularly those who have just arrived here. What a terrible thing for them to learn. We can't go down that road again.

That's why I strongly support our PC leader Tim Hudak's amended motion which reads: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan, including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the \$207 million that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper."

I was particularly eager to speak about this amended motion today because of what's happening in my own riding of Leeds-Grenville. In fact, on Friday just past, I was interviewed in my constituency office by the Leeds and Grenville Immigration Partnership. It was a great meeting. They were taping a video. They've actually created a series of videos to help market my riding to new Ontarians, to show them the wonderful quality of life we have in Leeds-Grenville that has brought so many settlers to the banks of the St. Lawrence River, to the Rideau and to the farms and forests in between for hundreds and hundreds of years. It was a great meeting. Those early immigrants worked hard to shape the landscape and build our cities, towns and villages and, in the process, they contributed so much to the social and cultural fabric that makes eastern Ontario such a rich region.

And now we're looking to a new generation of immigrants from nations other than those in Western Europe. We need them to help us build a new economy that can help eastern Ontario compete with other regions of Ontario, Canada and the world. We need them to add their mark on our communities and their cultural traditions, which will not only strengthen the cultural tapestry, but will make it stronger at the same time.

The reality is that rural Ontario needs immigration. Recruiting these talented, risk-taking family-oriented new Ontarians to live in places in my riding like Brockville, Prescott, Gananoque and Westport must be a critical part of any economic development program. But as badly as we require their skills and as hard as groups like the immigration partnership in my riding are working to lay the groundwork to welcome them, the reality is the provincial government isn't helping. I know we're going to hear about how much this government is

spending on programs and they're going to tell us about the great job they are doing. For all that backslapping, it really isn't helping the people who need it.

In my own riding, part of my meeting last week was interesting; I talked to the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board because I wanted to talk to them about labour shortages in my riding. It was interesting, some of the statistics that they talked about in Leeds–Grenville. We're going to be facing some unique shortages, perhaps faster than what's predicted in Ontario and other parts of Canada, in our riding, due to the older median age of its population and the older workforce.

When I met with the immigration partnership in my riding, we talked about the statistics that I'll read into the record. In the 2006 census, the median age in Leeds and Grenville was 43.6; in Ontario, it was 39. And 45% of our workforce is over 45 years of age in Leeds–Grenville, as opposed to 41% in Ontario. When I met with the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board—and I'm going to be going to a seminar that they're putting on on Friday. They've done some exceptional work on some of the shortages that are taking place in Leeds–Grenville.

Thanks to the federal government for their settlement services to Ontario—and with their support, funding has tripled.

But I guess, again, I want to go back to measurable outcomes. Without accountability, if we don't know where the funds are going and where they're most needed, I'm afraid that we're just not getting there. At least, that's not the impression that I'm getting from people in my own riding, and I did have the opportunity to get some emails over the weekend that talk about immigration.

As you know, I was appointed a week or so ago to the post of critic. I took over from our leader, Tim Hudak. I had a great opportunity, as I said, to meet with the immigration partnership folks in my riding. I've spoken to my federal MP, Gord Brown, and I hope in the very near future to slip up to Ottawa—I'm very close, being in Leeds–Grenville—to meet, hopefully, with Minister Kenney to talk to him about his views and the partnership with Ontario.

But I do, as I said, want to talk about a couple of emails. The first was one that I received on Friday. It's from a gentleman who was a recent immigrant and moved to Brockville. He was an engineer back in the Philippines and brought with him extensive work experience in manufacturing. He worked for different multinational companies in the past and worked in Hong Kong for five years, as well, as an engineer. He's had both supervisory and managerial experience and has great technical knowledge in three industries. In fact, he sent me his resumé, and I really was impressed with his background. However, in his three months of job searching in Brockville and in nearby towns, he's extremely frustrated, as I know many Ontarians are, with the lack of a job opportunity. He's looking for some help from our office. He's looking for some help from the partnership

and from some of the employment agencies in our community.

The one person who's copied on the message was from the Employment and Education Centre. I made a member's statement last week about that great group in Brockville that's provided employment for all sectors. But again, this gentleman is frustrated over the fact that he is such a skilled worker and that there just aren't any opportunities for him.

I received a long email on Saturday from a lady in Brockville who read about my announcement that I was taking over the citizenship and immigration critic portfolio from our leader, Tim Hudak. She appreciated some of my comments. She arrived in Brockville in July 2010. They chose the city because it was in close proximity to Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa, right in that little triangle with the 401 and 416. Her husband was a professor of literature. She was an experienced administrator, having great difficulty trying to find work in the community. They have met with the immigration project coordinators. But when you're starting up a program, they're more working on some of the portals and the websites for the project, whereas this person talked about her need for researching jobs. She had some interesting comments, because she's an artist with the council of arts, which is a parallel body that she dealt with in Israel. Their experience since coming to Canada is that they just don't have the same opportunities. She talks about that in great depth, and she's given me four great suggestions for moving some of these things forward.

0930

One of the things that they felt extreme frustration on is the fact that they are skilled and their resumés seem to be totally disregarded in the community. It made me think of our leader, Tim Hudak, who, in June, introduced the Newcomers Employment Opportunities Act, 2010. The act would provide incentives for immigrant small business entrepreneurs to invest in Ontario. It also gives incentives for established businesses to provide job-specific language training for immigrant employees and achieves more transparency and accountability in the foreign credential recognition process.

I looked at these letters over the weekend, since my appointment, and it made great sense that a bill like what PC leader Tim Hudak was talking about would certainly help the situation.

Those were just a couple of voices that I believe we should be listening to when we set out for a new program, but it doesn't seem that they are. No; it's our party and our leader, Tim Hudak, that recognize that newcomers need programs that will ensure their skills are recognized. We need programs to help cut through red tape and assist them in integrating into rural and small-town Ontario where those communities are filled with opportunities for hard-working, entrepreneurial immigrants, and they need incentives to encourage them to venture outside the GTA to open new businesses. Those ideas can be found in Tim Hudak's amendment to this motion before this House today and in his Newcomers

Employment Opportunities Act, 2010, introduced earlier this year.

Those are the plans. I know that, as well, when we started, there was a lot of discussion about whether we have a plan or whether we don't have a plan. Clearly, in this regard, there is a plan that our leader has put on the table. They reward those who come here to work hard, to play by the rules, and do away with the policy favoured by the current government that rewards only those who cozy up to them first.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to speak to the—
Applause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Dave. Good to see you.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can't do that.

I'll be speaking to the main motion and the amendment because I'll be supporting both of them for different reasons.

I really understand why the minister is introducing this amendment, because there's good reason to be afraid of federal governments, irrespective of their political colourings. Some of you, of course, were too young and some of you were probably not involved in politics in 1990, but those were the days of—

Mr. Steve Clark: I was a mayor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You were a mayor, yes.

Those were the days of Brian Mulroney. I used to love his voice, that mellow voice. I loved it, and I used to love it when he said, "The GST will bring prosperity to the"—I loved that. Of course, it didn't bring any prosperity, but you remember a couple of those things.

Of course, we were in government in 1990; we, New Democrats, with the then leader of our party, Premier Bob Rae, who has since left us and joined the Liberals. We were having one difficult economic time. Do you remember that? It was tough.

Hon. John Milloy: The Speaker's too young.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's right.

Of course, the Conservatives used to say, "You don't got a revenue problem, you got a spending problem." And so did the Liberals, of course, because the Liberals didn't cut us any slack, either. They used to say the same thing about the NDP: "You don't got a revenue problem, you got a spending problem." The problem is, we had a huge revenue problem, but none of the opposition parties then, Liberals or Conservatives, ever extended a hand out and said, "You're right, Bob. We're with you, Bob." None of them, and of course, that's the way it works. Politics is like that.

But we were on our own. Some of you are too young or too old to remember that we used to have a deal with the Conservative government. We had a cost-sharing agreement on welfare. Understand this: cost-sharing, 50-50. In that recessionary period, Mulroney decided to end that deal. You understand how difficult it was,

because people were unemployed. They were going on welfare. Our welfare bill went from \$1 billion to \$5.5 billion. We were in desperate times. We were looking for the federal government to continue lending their support to the province at a time when we most desperately needed it, and they cut the cord in 1990. Mulroney; God bless him, wherever he is.

In 1993, another Prime Minister whose name starts with an M, Mr. Martin—Mulroney, Martin; interesting. Marchese: There's the next logical progression. Martin comes into power. Understand, by 1993, things got better. The economy was getting better. But this is the time when Liberal Martin decided to make huge cuts to our transfer payments as well, and made huge cuts to unemployment insurance as a way of dealing with the deficit that we were left with, in 1990, at the federal level. So he made huge cuts to our transfer payments to Ontario, and of course that made us unhappy. Subsequent governments who followed us, the Conservatives, were, I'm assuming, very unhappy with those cuts.

The reason why I mention this brief little history is to say that there is good reason why these motions are put in front of this Legislature: because they're worried. They're worried that in these last two years of recessionary periods, where there is less money, the federal government might decide not to be as kind as they have been in the last five years. So I understand the motivation, as expressed by the member from Richmond Hill, by the Premier and by Minister Hoskins, through his motion. You never know, because it's quite possible they will start reducing the transfer payments. I have no doubt about it.

I know that the finance minister at the federal level said, "We're not going to do that. We're not going to do what previous governments did." I understand those pronouncements, but I don't believe them, and I suspect a lot of Liberals don't believe them as well. That's why they're nervous. So we have a motion here that says, "Send the money; frightened as hell." So we've got a motion that says, "Send the \$207 million that you told us you would send and let's renegotiate the deal."

Now, as my colleague our critic—good heavens. As my friend from—where is my friend?—Beaches—East York said in his remarks, we have, provincially and federally, constitutional obligations. The constitutional obligation of the federal government is to negotiate whatever immigration agreements with the provincial government. It's a duty. It's actually written down in law. And it doesn't say, "They shall need to have an arrangement around immigration issues," but "they may." That's the language that Liberals use in their bills; that I'm assuming we, New Democrats, used when we were in power; and that the Tories used. So, the language is "may," but the effect is, for legal purposes, the same.

So your motion makes it appear somehow that they're not going to negotiate with you, but you all know—at least if you didn't, you did once the member from Beaches—East York told you—that they have a constitutional obligation to meet and discuss and do an arrange-

ment with you; that they will. Except your motion makes it appear as if somehow they will not, and that's the politics of it, which I understand. I really do. But I hope you accept the fact, once it's been brought to your attention by the member from Beaches–East York, that negotiations must happen and they likely will.

0940

Now, whether you get the full piñata or not, I don't know. That remains to be seen, and for that you will have to continue to negotiate, to hammer strongly against the Conservative government federally, which we're happy to help you with.

Part of the problem is that, around issues of immigration, the federal government has been negligent. We're not just talking about the current government; we're talking about their predecessors, the Liberal government federally. They were equally feckless in their approach to these issues. They bring immigrants into the country and then they send them loose to every corner of Canada to fend for themselves. They bring them in, highly qualified people, by and large, the majority with degrees, except for the 30% who have less than a high school education, but the majority with degrees. They bring them into the country with the expectation that they're likely to find a job in their field, and then, when they don't find a job, the reaction of the federal government is, "Well, it's too bad. So sad." It ought not to be that way. It ought to be that the federal government has an obligation and better manages their affairs so that immigrants, when they come in, know very well what to expect. The problem is, the majority of them, with degrees, have no clue what to expect. They actually believe the government that if they let them in because of their degrees, somehow they're going to find jobs, and then they don't. I call that irresponsible governing by federal parties, both Conservative and Liberal, in the last 15 years.

They ought to be doing what Quebec does, and I'll speak about that in a moment, which is that you've got agents who meet with prospective immigrants and basically tell them what to expect, give them the information they require to get their licence, should their licence not be applicable once they come into this country. The point of that is that they know then whether to come to this country or to go somewhere else. At least they're not in the dark about what to expect when they come as immigrants.

Quebec does a good job with that. Quebec has negotiated an immigration arrangement where they decide on the immigrants that they need and the immigrants that they want. Now, much of that is based on language, which I understand; I really do. I'm a big supporter of Quebec and I'm a big supporter of bilingualism in this country. I wish everybody was bilingual. I accept the fact that Quebec has those diverse interests and needs, and I accept the fact that they are the only province in Canada where they conduct their business in French. It's great. So to have sought, as a province, the power to do immigration on their own was a remarkable thing. I call

that a remarkable accomplishment by the province of Quebec, which is the second-largest province, by way of population, in Canada.

The question the member from Beaches–East York raised is, why isn't Ontario doing that? Why is it that every four or five years, the province is left begging the federal government to negotiate, and to negotiate a fair deal? Why do you do that? You look like little children begging for more, as opposed to behaving as an independent province with the power to behave independently, and you could if you decided that that's the power you wanted. Yet none of you seem to speak to it at all: not the members who speak to it, not the minister who spoke to it and not the Premier of this province.

For some reason, some of you are happy to keep this servile relationship with the federal government. I don't know why some of you don't squirm in shame around this, as I say it. Some of you are going to speak after me. That's good. But that's what you should be demanding, because then you have clarity with respect to what you want to be able to accomplish with immigration.

Now, I suspect the reason why you want to do this is so that you, the province, can continue to blame the federal government for not giving you enough money—because they have the responsibility; not you, really—and so you can continue to take political cover when things fail you. It's not good, really. You don't look like statesmen and stateswomen when you do that. It's a political ploy, I understand, but it doesn't really work anymore. You should be demanding that you have your own power to determine what immigrants Ontario needs and not let the federal government, that has not done this very well, continue to do it badly in perpetuity. I think it's time.

I also believe that what the Conservative amendment says is not a bad thing. To demand accountability is something you Liberals should be supporting. What's wrong with that? If you are spending the money as you claim you are, then show how you are doing that. Account for the money that the federal government is giving you in terms of how you're spending that to help newcomers once they land in this province. Why would you be afraid to do that? By not accepting this amendment, you are afraid.

And if you reject it, as I suspect you might, you're saying to the public that you're quite happy to take federal money and that then you will spend it as you wish, rather than spending it for real immigrant needs, and the needs are quite remarkable. Immigrants come to this province and the majority, 50% of them, come to Ontario—it used to be higher—and 79% come to Toronto. By "Toronto," I think they include Toronto and the GTA, because nobody can afford to stay in Toronto anymore. When they say "Toronto," I really do believe they mean the GTA.

That's why poverty has grown in the GTA, because Toronto has become a very expensive place to live in. So they moved out to the GTA, and all of a sudden, the GTA is experiencing poverty issues—God bless them, because

they never had any sympathy for Toronto in the old days when the whole of Canada dumped their problems on Toronto. And they used to criticize Toronto at the same time for being a haven for poverty issues, public housing and whatever else you can think of.

Then, all of a sudden, the GTA experiences problems in health and social services, and lo and behold, they're asking for help. I love it; it's great. It's good that the GTA is asking for help finally. It's good that the GTA is finally saying, "Oh, we've got a little problemo to deal with." It's no longer Toronto that's suffering the problemo; it's now the GTA and beyond. I love that, because it means they're beginning to understand what some of us have had to deal with for a long, long time.

It used to be that we had welcome houses in Ontario, until my good friend Mike Harris got rid of them. Oh, I shouldn't talk about Mike Harris anymore; he's gone. But he got rid of the welcome houses. You understand, the welcome houses were the places where newcomers could go and say, "I need help. Can you direct me? Can you tell me where to go for assistance, for language training, or any kind of training, or any help? Where can I find any services? How can I get my licence accredited? Where do I go?" I don't know where they can go anymore. The welcome houses don't exist and I don't know what the Liberals have put in their place to support them.

0950

The Liberals are asking for \$207 million. I agree with the Conservatives in this regard, because they can be good in opposition. In opposition they are great. I have learned to love them in opposition; I have. I often say, "I hope they stay there longer," because they get better in opposition, they really do. They become human, or at least humanized.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Who are you loving?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Tories.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: You love them?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I love them in opposition, yes.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Wow.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But it's equally true that even Liberals, when they were in opposition, were good, too. Something happens on the way to the farm on the other side.

The point is, this is a good amendment introduced by the opposition parties. We need to account for where your money is going. When you stand up to speak, you have to say, "We agree with the amendment because we think it goes a long way. We want to account. We want to tell you, actually, Marchese, where the money is going. We're going to delineate, line by line, literally, so that you can tell." That would be good for me, good for Tories, good for Liberals, good for everyone because immigrants are having a difficult time.

Even though Tories and Liberals have opened the doors for doctors—and by the way, if we didn't need doctors, neither the Tories nor the Liberals would have opened that door to them. But because we needed doctors in the last 12 or 15 years, the immigrants who have

degrees, who have been able to become accredited to practice their profession are those who are doctors. In almost every other profession they're struggling, for different reasons, and they are virtually on their own. Use your constitutional power to stop begging and use your constitutional power, because you have a Minister of Immigration, and actually do something on your own without constantly having to complain about what the federal government is doing to you and not doing enough for you.

It would be good for you to become finally independent. It would be great for you to finally ask the federal government to negotiate a deal like Quebec, which gives you, finally, the independence you need to be able to do this job right.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to stand today in strong support of a new and comprehensive Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, one that puts the local needs of our newcomers first. I would also like to commend the member for Trinity-Spadina for supporting this government's motion.

When I immigrated to Canada a lot more challenges existed, especially for seeking accreditation, despite having two master's degrees and 10 years of teaching experience. I must admit that now we have better programs and I would like to share with the members of this House that, having said that, we have come a long way but still we have a long way to go. Many newcomers still face language barriers and difficulty settling. As someone who has immigrated to this country, this new immigration agreement is something that is very important to me and the constituents in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South, which is a very diverse riding.

Despite the challenging economic times, Ontario continues to drive Canada's economy. Ontario generates 39% of the national GDP, produces 43% of total exports and is the home of almost 50% of all the employees in the financial sector, high tech and other knowledge-based industries.

Ontario is a destination of choice for immigrants to Canada. In 2009, over 100,000 immigrants coming to Canada landed in Ontario. This represents 42% of the total immigration to Canada. Out of that, 27,000 newcomers settle every year in the region of Peel and many more in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. Ontario's first immigration agreement with the federal government was a good start. It is now time to apply what we have learned from that experience and develop better ways to help our newcomers so that Ontario can benefit from their skills and talents.

There has been a shift in the immigration categories from skilled workers to family class and refugees. As a result of that shift, those immigrants who opt to settle in the province of Ontario need more and more settlement and integration services.

Ottawa has signed federal-provincial agreements with other provinces such as Manitoba, British Columbia, and

Quebec. These agreements address the unique local needs of newcomers in those provinces. I see no reason why the federal government should not sign an agreement that addresses the unique local needs of newcomers in the province of Ontario.

To date, Ottawa has withheld \$207 million from the first immigration agreement. I urge the federal government to live up to its commitment and release all funds from the previous agreement. In addition, I urge the federal government to step up and begin negotiations immediately with us so that our immigrants can benefit from the services they need to succeed.

We need a new agreement, an agreement that provides all immigrants with the services to overcome language and settlement barriers, an agreement that allows our service providers to spend more time helping our newcomers and less on administration, an agreement that better addresses the needs of our communities to attract and retain newcomers. We believe that by administering language and settlement services provincially, we can help reduce duplication and help our immigrants when they need those services. We want a new comprehensive agreement that puts the local needs of our newcomers first because we strongly believe that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

I would like to encourage all members of this House to support this agreement and stand up for the newcomers in your ridings as we move forward to build a stronger Ontario for all families, new and old.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I certainly appreciate the comments that have been made this morning both on the amendment and on the main motion from the government.

Mr. Hudak has been trying to improve the motion that was put forward by the government. The motion that was put forward by the government, as Mr. Marchese, the member for Trinity-Spadina, said a little earlier, sounds a bit whiney. It sounds a bit like the Ontario Liberals once again suggesting that the federal government is short-changing Ontario—and they might be. There's always an argument to be made there that you never get enough money from the federal government with respect to immigration. Certainly, my belief is that Quebec gets a better deal from the federal government, and that may be the fault of all three parties in this Legislature, that we failed to seek independence from the federal government with respect to immigration matters in the country of Canada.

We've always been the good guys and gals, as it were, in Confederation, and we have sought to keep the country together on almost all program fronts. Now we have labour market agreements separate from other provinces, special agreements with the federal government, so we do have some independence with respect to training and money that comes for post-secondary education. Perhaps it's time, not through whiney resolutions like this one but through formal agreements with the federal government,

that we seek a degree of independence from the federal government, as Quebec has done in the past.

I'm just going to be very short here this morning. I would say that we would hope, as the NDP have indicated, that the Liberals would also see Mr. Hudak's amendment as an enhancement of what they're trying to say, an expansion of what they are asking for. It's a recognition by the PC caucus that we certainly welcome immigration and we believe the federal government should do its fair share. But having resolutions on the floor of this House, which frankly are a bit of a waste of time, and whining at the federal government isn't the way to do it. We need the Premier to sit down with the Prime Minister and the respective ministers, do the hard work that's required to hammer out agreements, and then the proper money will flow to the province of Ontario.

I suspect one of the stumbling blocks is that the federal government will want to audit that money. It has always wanted to audit the money in post-secondary education or what they give the provinces for health and social services. I used to work for the federal government at one time back in the mid-1980s, and it was very, very frustrating that you would transfer gobs of money to the provinces, but you weren't sure whether they were actually spending it on health care or social services or post-secondary education or welfare. I suspect that's one of the stumbling blocks here.

When it came to training, that was sorted out. The federal government, because of the agreement that we now have, has been able to satisfy itself and the taxpayers of Canada for the same taxpayers in Ontario that the money is being spent on what it is sent to the province for.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll yield the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Seeing none, on September 28, 2010, Mr. Hudak moved that the motion be amended by removing the words "and the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding" and "promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately" and substitute the words: "[A]nd calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the" and "that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing".

Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

The vote shall be deferred to deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1005 to 1030.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(b), the House leader of the official opposition, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts. The order for second reading of Bill 140 may therefore not be called today.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table an energy conservation progress report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario entitled Rethinking Energy Conservation in Ontario—Results.

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I also beg to inform the members that today the Canadian Hearing Society is visiting Queen's Park, and we will have sign-language interpreters on the floor.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: To that end, I would like to introduce and welcome Lesley Roach and Paula Bath, who are the interpreters from the Canadian Hearing Society. They're here for the annual Canadian Hearing Society Day at Queen's Park. We thank them for their services and we're happy to have them here today.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome a number of members from Durham region here today, who are joining us in the gallery. They're here to express their concern with respect to the extension of Highway 407 eastbound.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to welcome Lorin MacDonald, who is a lawyer and is here today with the Canadian Hearing Society.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome a constituent with a farm business from my riding. He's here with the Ontario Egg Producers: Hubert Schillings. He has a wonderful farm family in Durham. Welcome, Hubert.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very proud to introduce members of the Egg Farmers of Ontario board of

directors. We have Carolynne Griffith, Scott Graham, Harry Pelissero, Hubert Schillings, Victor Slobodian and Laurent Souigny. Welcome, and thank you for a fabulous breakfast. It was just wonderful.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I would like to welcome Mayor John Gray from the city of Oshawa, as well as Councillor John Neal, who have joined us here at Queen's Park today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to, in the west gallery, introduce my wife, Carole, and our friends who are retired teachers, who taught in my riding: Jim Leavens, Rae Leavens and Barb Gibson.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to introduce the family of Jennifer Boothby, a page from Etobicoke Centre: Christina Boothby, Bob Boothby, Carol Ann Boothby, Frank O'Rourke, Gillian O'Rourke, Ruth Boothby, Dan O'Rourke, Linda O'Rourke, Katie O'Rourke Macole and Susan O'Rourke. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Steve Clark: I also would like to introduce representatives from the Egg Farmers of Ontario. I'd like to welcome Janet Hueglin Hartwick, who's here, and also a dear friend of mine—we went to high school together and she is now a Brockville city councillor: from Burnbrae Farms, Mary Jean McFall.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to introduce and welcome to the House members of the Canadian Hearing Society. They're here at Queen's Park today for their annual day of advocacy and awareness. Thank you and welcome.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce Councillor-Elect Corinna Traill from the council of Clarington, as well as Jeremy Woodcock, a citizen who's here protesting the failure to extend the 407, and Mark Canning, who is a member of the 407 highway extension committee. They're asking the Minister of Transportation—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): These are introductions of guests, not members' statements.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Even though we already introduced Mr. Souigny, I would like to say that Mr. Souigny comes from where the sun rises in the morning. He comes from my riding and he's also the national president. That's where you get the best eggs in the province.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: As well, I have a number of other guests from Oshawa: Mr. Bob Bell, Mr. Doug Hawkins and a schoolmate and Scouting mate of mine, Mr. Mark Canning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity and ask all members to welcome a former member, Harry Pelissero, who represented Lincoln in the 34th Parliament. Welcome back to the Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, when you took office, Ontario's energy prices

were among the lowest and most competitive in Canada. Today, under your misguided energy policies, they now rank among the highest in North America, yet you want to continue to drive us down the path of high-cost energy.

Yesterday I pointed out, Premier, that Spain's energy experiments—that you are copying; of massive subsidies to corporations—cost 2.2 jobs in the economy for every job that was created by subsidies. It gets worse. The Bruno Leoni Institute says Italy's similar experiment killed 4.8 jobs for every job created in the whole economy and 6.9 jobs for every job created in manufacturing.

Premier, how are you going to avoid the job losses experienced elsewhere when you're copying an outdated plan from Europe?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure what my honourable colleague is talking about when he talks about other jurisdictions. I do know that he's a man without a plan. I do know as well that we continue to have a plan here on our side of the House.

When it comes to jobs, just a couple weeks ago I was in Hamilton and met there with the folks at JNE Consulting. This meeting flowed from a trip I had made just a few weeks before that to China. There's now a joint venture. They're establishing 300 new jobs there in clean energy.

Just last week, the Minister of Energy announced 150 jobs in clean energy technologies in Cambridge. I've spoken as well about some 10,000 Ontario farmers who are signing on to produce clean energy for the people of Ontario. We're talking about more jobs, not fewer jobs. We're talking about clean energy and reliable electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Hamilton and Niagara families know the Premier has now snuck into town a couple of times last week and then snuck out of town without answering questions from the media.

Premier, let me continue. I think you should know that the Wall Street Journal, earlier this year, had the authors of the institute's report that I referenced earlier on. It said the evidence of Italian job losses from energy experiments, these massive subsidies to corporations, is consistent with Spain's. Your "buy high, sell low" policies have created a gold rush when it comes to massive subsidies that are driving up rates and chasing jobs out of our province.

Spain, France, Australia and Germany are now all walking away from their expensive, massive subsidies. What makes you think, Premier, that you have a more intelligent understanding than countries who are now admitting that their expensive experiments went badly off the rails?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We know that families want us to shut down dirty coal because they want to breathe clean air. We know that farmers are very excited about participating in clean energy production. Maybe we should hear from businesses.

This is what the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario commented with respect to our long-term energy plan. This comes from Adam White, the

president. He said: "This plan means a stable investment climate, and that means more jobs." He went on to say, "Competitive electricity rates are an absolute priority for AMPCO members. The plan sets out a framework to create a reliable, economically viable electricity system for Ontario."

So if we put it all together: Families want clean air, farmers want to participate in clean energy production and businesses support a stable electricity pricing environment. We're putting it all together. It's going to be there for the next 20 years for Ontario families and Ontario businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your so-called energy plan has chased jobs out of our province and is driving up rates for families. It has been an unmitigated disaster for the Ontario economy, and Premier, if you want the next election to be about your plan to double hydro bills yet again, we say, "Bring it on." We'll take you on because we're on the side of Ontario families and Ontario small businesses that say enough is enough. Let's make it about affordability and bringing jobs to our province.

Premier, I know you have a love affair with European policy-makers who voted for massive subsidies to particular projects. I say to you again: Those countries now are backing away from their expensive energy experiments, but you want to double down. You want to put our economy at risk. You want to put the livelihood of Ontario families at risk. Premier, why won't you look at the evidence and abandon your expensive energy experiments—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Euro-bashing puzzles me and I'll leave that to others to contemplate. We're going to stay focused on creating more jobs in Ontario.

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The leader of the official opposition may be less than enthusiastic about our long-term energy plan, but I can tell you, one by one, members of his own party are rising in support. The member for Sarnia-Lambton attended our announcement of the world's largest solar farm in his backyard. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant said this when he attended our green energy hub announcement: "Our area has significant economic and geographic potential for solar energy generation." That's from within their own caucus. Then there's the MPP for Leeds-Grenville. He said, "Building future jobs in the renewable energy field is clearly the way to go."

There's an outbreak of rash reasonability inside the Conservative caucus when it comes to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the Premier stuffs his ears with straw to avoid the facts of Europe's experience with

expensive energy experiments like his. You, not too long ago, boasted that you were going to follow in the path of Italy, Germany, Spain and other jurisdictions, but, Premier, as I've laid out, they are now moving away from these expensive energy experiments.

But if you're not going to see the evidence abroad, then perhaps you'll listen to an important group here at home: The Canadian Federation of Independent Business polled its members, and a whopping 87% said they don't trust you or believe you when it comes to a clear picture of the Ontario economy, and a similar number, a whopping 82% of small businesses said that you've mismanaged electricity pricing in the province of Ontario.

Premier, do you take this to mean that your campaign to confuse Ontario families is really working?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just quoted those folks who arguably might have the most at stake when it comes to electricity: the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario. The president said, again, "This plan means a stable investment climate, and that means more jobs."

Certainly, when it comes to small business, they've expressed a tremendous amount of appreciation for our clean energy benefits. Effective January 1, there is going to be a reduction in electricity bills for the course of the next five years. It's going to benefit our families, it's going to benefit our small businesses, and it's going to benefit our farmers.

We recognize that there's going to be an increase in electricity prices. They on the other side believe somehow that there will be no increases in electricity prices; I think they believe in the electricity fairy. We don't believe in the electricity fairy. We believe that we've got to be responsible, to be fair with Ontarians, when it comes to putting forward a reasonable, responsible plan for them. That's what we've done, and a clean energy benefit will be of real support to families, small businesses and farmers as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's a shame the Premier does not take the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's recommendations seriously. This is one of the largest organizations in Canada when it comes to advocating for hard-working small business people. They should be the economic engine that drives job creation in Ontario, but your high-cost energy policies are forcing them to cut back. One in five of its members now, Premier, is saying they're going to have to reduce staff in the next quarter, and the vast majority say they're not going to hire any new staff at all. The reasons they give? Your tax grabs like the HST, and now skyrocketing energy bills are a top concern.

Premier, you've doubled prices, and your fantasy plan is going to double hydro prices yet again. Why is it that Premier McGuinty is the only one who sees no connection between job losses and higher hydro rates in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, these are mutterings and musings from the plan-free zone in Ontario. My

friend is very negative and pessimistic about the economy and the growth that is in fact taking place.

We heard good news this morning from General Motors. We insisted on being there for the auto sector at a time of tremendous challenge. We invested on behalf of the people of Ontario. They announced today that they are hiring back the last 400 employees that they laid off, but more than that, they're hiring on 300 new employees. The fact of the matter is that production is up. The fact of the matter is that they're showing confidence in our tax policies; they're showing confidence in our energy policies. They're showing confidence in Ontario and in our shared future. I would encourage my colleague opposite to demonstrate that kind of confidence from time to time, because that's what the people of Ontario want to see.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, it's a bit rich, coming from this Premier, that he has a plan, when he has a plan of the week when it comes to energy. Premier, you have backtracked so often, poor Minister Broten should get out of the way, because you're going to run her over with all of your backtracks in the province. Clearly, this is no way to run energy policy in the province. It's impacting on jobs; it's driving up bills for families and seniors.

Premier, the CFIB even cites your smart meter tax machines as a major concern. Seventy per cent of them say it's impacting negatively on their ability to create jobs and to do business. Now we see that a number of—I believe nine—local distribution companies are telling you to hold off on this program, that it's not working properly, and we hear from families that your smart meter tax machines are driving the rates through the roof. Premier, will you admit your smart meter tax machines are a failed initiative and that you need to rethink it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: At the end of the day, I'll side with the Environmental Commissioner when it comes to supporting our smart meters. I'll also side with the experience of many parts of the world, which demonstrates—including the United Kingdom. I know that my honourable colleague has not made reference to the UK, but the new Prime Minister of the UK has said in no uncertain terms that they're going to continue to move forward and, in fact, accelerate their plan to put smart meters in homes and businesses.

My friend has made reference to the CFIB on a number of occasions. I want to quote from their press release of November 18. The headline says it all: "Small Businesses Welcome Hydro Relief."

They say, "We are pleased to see the government acknowledging the impact of its energy policies on the province's job-creators."

We've got the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario. We've got the CFIB expressing support for our clean energy benefit. We've got farmers lining up to participate in clean energy production. We've got families saying, time and time again, "We want to stop the pollution. We want our kids to breathe clean air." We've got tremendous and growing support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Today, the Premier sent his staff and increasingly desperate caucus out into the rain to hand out flyers promising lower hydro bills. Does the Premier think it's fair for the Liberal Party to promise lower hydro bills when everything, from smart meters to private nuclear deals to the unfair HST, will be driving hydro prices up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my colleague. What we're doing is something that we're able to do because we have a plan. We're communicating a plan to the people of Ontario. They can't go door to door. They can't go bus-stopping. They can't stand at the doors of the subway and hand out information about a plan, because they don't have a plan. We do have a plan. We're proud of our plan. We want to share that plan with the people of Ontario. We want more and more people to understand that this is about ensuring that we have a clean air future. It's about understanding that we have a future with all kinds of new jobs and exciting new clean energy industries. It's about families and businesses knowing that they can have the security that comes from knowing that we're going to have, for the next 20 years, a reliable supply of electricity. All we need to enjoy our lives and all we need to grow our businesses on top of that is clean energy, and we're creating jobs. That's the plan that we have, and that's why we're communicating it to Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government says that they're helping people save, but the people who run the system are saying anything but that. EnWin in Windsor, like many other utilities, is delaying their smart meter implementation because they're still scrambling to make it work. The manager of customer service at EnWin says that when, or if, the system is in place, customers will have to work "really hard" to stop bills from climbing. Does the Premier really think anyone believes his Liberals are going to help with the family budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague should know that we've been making tremendous efforts to help families with the budget, in addition to the fact that there's going to be a clean energy benefit which will be effective as of January 1 this coming year. It's a 10% reduction in electricity bills for the course of the next five years.

I also note that during the past couple of months, 220,000 Ontario students have been receiving \$150 cheques for their textbook and technology grants. I also note that this December, hundreds of thousands of Ontario families will receive the HST transition cheque. That's \$335 per family and \$100 per individual. I think those are very welcome supports at a trying time for our families and our students, and we look forward to finding more ways to help our families acknowledge their challenges.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While Liberal MPPs stand in the rain offering false promises of relief, people struggling with their bills can see the facts very clearly. Local utilities like EnWin are saying it will be "really hard" to save money with a smart meter, and even harder as expensive nuclear deals and the HST drive prices up.

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Why would Ontario families have any faith whatsoever that the Premier's latest plan will save them any money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm a little bit confused by my honourable colleague's approach, because for months on end she stood in this very Legislature and asked that we reduce electricity bills by 8%. We've done more than that: We're reducing them by 10%. Again, that is just one small part of a very comprehensive, thoughtful, responsible, honest long-term energy plan for the people of Ontario.

Again, I say to my honourable colleagues opposite that we have a plan. It's out there for Ontarians to see. They can kick the tires. We're going to keep talking to them about it. I ask them now, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to put forward their plan. They remain part and parcel in a plan-free zone. We've never seen anything like this before. We put forward a 20-year plan; they've put forward nothing. I ask them, on behalf of Ontarians, to put forward that plan and let's take a good, long look at it.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The government continues to say that it's got an energy plan, but already it's been torn to shreds. Here's what people are saying about the so-called plan. Carole Barry from Terrace Bay writes, "Because of the high hydro and because I live on very low income, I have made the decision next year to walk away from my home ... this 46% increase coming is very scary."

Now, given the Premier's failed seven-year record, why would people like Ms. Barry have any faith whatsoever that the Premier's latest plan is going to help them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would encourage my honourable colleague to do everything within her power, and I'm sure she would want to do this, to make sure Ontarians are fully informed when it comes to the details of the plan that we've put forward. Over the course of the next 20 years, the electricity bill will go up, on an annual basis, on average 3.5%. During the course of the past 20 years, it went up, on average, annually 3.6%. I want families to know as well that electricity went up during the last 20 years 3.6%, natural gas 4.7%, cable TV 5% and fuel oil 5.2%. The average resale price of a home has more than doubled. I want Ontarians to know that in the natural order of things it is not unusual for prices to go up. We're ensuring that during the next 20 years it will in fact go up at a lower rate when it comes to electricity costs than it did during the past 20 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Irene Mielnik from Windsor has her own thoughts about this government's so-called energy plan. She writes, "I'm not in favour of a temporary fix that you call a rebate ... there is also something desperately wrong with the smart meters being installed and the complaints from residents whose bills have skyrocketed." Why should Ms. Mielnik and people like her believe that the Liberals' latest attempt to spin their energy plan has any truth whatsoever?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, 3.5% on average during the course of the next 20 years, and we've put out a plan. It's comprehensive, it's responsible, it's thoughtful and it speaks to our future. We want clean air. We want reliability when it comes to our electricity supply and want to make sure that we create more jobs. That's our plan. We've got a plan that's out. Again, they don't have a plan out.

These new jobs are an important dimension to our plan. When I was in Hamilton just a couple weeks ago at JNE Consulting, we announced 300 new jobs in the production of clean energy technologies. I wish at some point in time my honourable colleague would stand up and speak on behalf of those families that are going to benefit from those jobs. I think I know what they'd say. They'd say, "Thank you for thinking of our future. Thank you for not just putting before us a proposal for clean air and reliable supply, but, be it in my capacity now as a mum or a dad, to go home and look my kids in the eye and say, 'We're going to make it because there's a new job for me. It's going to support our household. We've got a bright future.'" I wish she'd say that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government has slapped an HST on people's hydro bills, said people are just going to have to pay more and then they scrambled. They scrambled to reverse themselves when their poll numbers started to plummet. People see through it.

John Akermanis from Aurora writes this: "The 10% rebate is a joke and likely has more to do with an election"—unparliamentary word, and I won't use it; it starts with a B—"than anything else."

Why should people like Mr. Akermanis believe the government's latest tale when they have completely ignored those people for so many years—seven long years, in fact?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague, for months on end, stood up in this Legislature and asked, I think with all sincerity, that we reduce electricity bills by 8%. We have, in fact, reduced them by 10%. She now chooses to call that a ploy. What was it on her part when she was asking us to cut them by 8%? If we believe her sincerity when it comes to 8%, then she should trust our sincerity when it comes to 10%.

At the end of the day, it's about ensuring that families have the capacity to manage this transition as we move into a clean energy future. The fact of the matter is that governments of all stripes have failed to rise to the

occasion when it comes to ensuring that we have a reliable supply of clean electricity. That's what we've done. That's what our plan is all about. That's what we're going to continue to move forward with.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Energy.

Interjection: He's not here.

Mr. John O'Toole: The other Minister of Energy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I guess my question is to the Premier. Yesterday, in question period, Premier, you told members of this assembly that a constituent of mine, Wayne Wilson, a farmer from Uxbridge, was a supporter of your expensive energy experiment.

What does Wayne Wilson of Uxbridge have to say? Here is a quote: "In my opinion the government has not been truthful." He goes on to say that your expensive energy experiment and taxes doubled his hydro bill while letting you say the kilowatt-per-hour rate has not risen. He calls this "creative accounting."

Why did you tell Ontario families that Wayne Wilson supports your expensive energy experiment when, in fact, Wayne Wilson doesn't support your experiment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We do know that there are some 10,000 Ontario farmers who are participating in our plan to generate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the opportunity to thank Mr. Wilson, who is a crop farmer in Uxbridge. He grows corn and soy. He was one of the first in the Uxbridge area to install solar panels on the roof of one of his—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, I'm not stopping the clock.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to thank Mr. Wilson; he's a crop farmer in Uxbridge. He grows corn and soy. He was one of the first in the Uxbridge area to install solar panels on the roof of one of his barns. He has 66 panels, generating 10 kilowatts of clean electricity. He has been feeding his power into the grid since August, and we're very grateful for his efforts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Premier, I know that we have excellent farmers in Durham—some of them are here today, in fact—but you try to confuse the families of Ontario, including misrepresenting some of the views on this expensive energy experiment.

Page 2 of your Sussex Strategy campaign says it is critical to confuse the public and the media away from the price and to attribute it to farm income. You were

wrong to tell Ontario families that Wayne Wilson supports your energy experiment when, in fact, he doesn't.

Why is Premier McGuinty not simply telling the people of Ontario the truth?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: Would the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, I've asked you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw the part about the truth.

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to repeat the facts because I think they're pretty important here. Mr. Wilson is a crop farmer in Uxbridge. He grows corn and soy. He's one of the first in the Uxbridge area to install solar panels on the roof of one of his barns. He has 66 panels generating 10 kilowatts of clean electricity. He's been feeding his power into the grid since August, and we're grateful for his participation in this program.

But you should know that he's one of 10,000 Ontario farmers who have signed on to participate in our clean energy program. This is great news for families because it's helping to make the Ontario farm, especially the small Ontario farm, more viable, which means Ontario families will continue to have access to good-quality, homegrown Ontario foods. It's good for farmers, and it's good for families.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a question for the Premier. Today, the Environmental Commissioner raises questions about the McGuinty government's non-performance on energy conservation. The Environmental Commissioner says the McGuinty government won't achieve even its modest 2010 targets for conservation. The Ontario Clean Air Alliance reports that this government spends \$60 on new electricity supply for every \$1 it spends on energy conservation, and the government has only pursued two thirds of the conservation measures deemed cost-effective by the Ontario Power Authority.

The question: Why does the McGuinty government put expensive new gas and nuclear plants ahead of cost-effective energy conservation and energy efficiency?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: My question is, when we conserved 1,700 megawatts of electricity in the province of Ontario, why didn't the NDP support us? I think that is something that we can all be proud of because if we can not use the electricity in the first place, then we don't have to get into expensive new generation. That's why the people of Ontario are supporting our plan.

We want to thank the Environmental Commissioner for his good work and his report. He is respected by all sides of the House.

There's always more work to be done, but it is important to remember that conservation is at the heart of our long-term energy plan. On this side of the House, we have a plan, including a plan for conservation. We're going to build on the 1,700 megawatts that we've already conserved. That's why we're moving forward with our ambitious goals. The only way to get out of dirty coal in this province is to conserve and use green energy. That's what we're focused on on this side of the House, and we want to thank the Environmental Commissioner for his—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Conservation is exactly what the Environmental Commissioner says you're not achieving.

His report was written before the government released its so-called long-term energy plan, and that's too bad because he would have raised concern about the great McGuinty slowdown on energy conservation, going from a goal of 6,000 megawatts of conservation by 2020 to less than a quarter of that between 2020 and 2030. Why? Because that's when expensive new nuclear reactors are expected to come online: in 2020.

The question again: Why does the McGuinty government continue to invest all kinds of money in expensive nuclear reactors and gas plants while you continue to ignore thoughtful energy efficiency—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I think a little history lesson is important. When the NDP were in power, they cancelled all the conservation programs in the province of Ontario. We've had to bring them back.

Why is it that the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance gave Ontario an A+ for conservation last year, up from a C- just six years ago?

Our home energy savings program has helped 250,000 homeowners make their homes more energy efficient through savings and retrofits. That's like taking some 83,000 cars off the road. Our conservation of some 1,700 megawatts is the amount of power used by 500,000 homes in the province of Ontario. That is making a measurable difference.

Is there more to do? Absolutely. That's why on this side of the House, where we have a long-term energy plan compared to the NDP, the "no darned plan" party over there that doesn't have an energy plan, we've made conservation an important keystone of that plan, and we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Since the province recently announced its intention to repeal the Social Housing Reform Act of 2001 and replace it with a new piece of legislation, residents in our western Mississauga

communities of Streetsville, Meadowvale and Lisgar have asked if there is new money being announced through the measures proposed in the bill. Minister, our patterns of poverty in big cities like Mississauga and Brampton are different from Metro Toronto. Please outline what this proposed legislation will do for those in the 905 belt who face very urgent housing needs.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. This legislation, if passed, is about fixing an outdated, inefficient housing system and building on existing resources. It's about putting people first, finally. It's about giving municipalities and service managers the flexibility to do what they need to do in order to serve the people we all serve. It's about being creative, allowing that creativity to take place so that we can maximize the effectiveness and the efficiency of the \$2.5 billion we've invested since 2003. It's about ensuring that the ongoing \$430 million we invest in social housing is invested in the wisest possible way. It is allowing those service providers to make those critical decisions that will affect the local people, the people we are mandated to serve.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Like the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, I too have heard many constituents in my riding of Mississauga—Brampton South who have expressed some concerns with regard to the social housing and the amount of funding being provided by our government.

My question is also to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, having listened to your response, I think there is a lot there that our 905 colleagues can bring back to constituents in other growth-driven ridings. You discussed provincial money being invested both currently and in the past. Can you please outline what these investments are achieving in Mississauga and how this proposed new legislation will enhance the value of those investments?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank that member for the question as well. She certainly has a passion for serving her constituents in a very, very real way.

In Peel, the members on this side of the House have helped secure investments that have resulted in—and this is really remarkable—more than 1,200 newly built units, more than 12,300 units repaired, roughly 950 rent supplements and allowances, and more than 780 evictions prevented. This new legislation is ensuring that the monies that we put in annually, the \$430 million, are used most effectively. We want to ensure, as we move forward, if this legislation is passed, that service managers at the local level, which can meet the local needs best, are given that authority.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, last Thursday I asked the Premier about his wage freeze plan that has gone badly off the rails. After question period, media asked the finance

minister where the money will come from to pay all of the unplanned wage hikes. He said, "The deficit is so far this year already below what we projected," suggesting you will spend the billion dollars you didn't expect to have when you made your projections. But you already spent the billion dollars to pay down debt. How many times does McGuinty math let you spend the same dollar?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I refer the member opposite to the quarterly report from the Ministry of Finance, which will be audited by the Provincial Auditor. I remind him about the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which this government put in place because that member and his party left a hidden \$5-billion deficit. What they did in those days was they used plug numbers in their budget to try to pretend they had it balanced.

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We have worked hard to bring down the average wage settlement, working with our partners in the broader public sector on both sides, labour and management. We reject their approach. We do not believe it is in anyone's interest to force strikes, lockouts or more bad blood, especially as this fragile economy recovers. We will continue to work with our partners in the broader public sector for the best interests of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Minister of Finance: Last week, as acting energy minister, you spent a billion dollars for your so-called hydro credit. Your runaway spending habit is so bad, you want to spend the same dollar a third time in a bid to save face on a wage restraint plan that has gone badly off the rails. So you used the billion dollars to pay the wage increase, you used the billion dollars to reduce the debt and you used the same billion dollars to give the hydro credit. You spent \$1 billion in found money three times. No wonder Premier McGuinty is being called Canada's worst economic manager.

What makes you think Ontario families have a never-ending ability to pay more for runaway spending on all of Premier McGuinty's expensive experiments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think Ontario families are looking at the results in education; we have higher graduation rates. I think they're looking at health care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontarians have access to a doctor. We have shortened wait times. We have worked hard to get ourselves through the worst downturn since the Great Depression. We've recovered 75% of the jobs that were lost. General Motors, just today, had another good announcement: Not only are they bringing back the last folks who were laid off—and those are real Ontario families—they're hiring additional workers.

Ontarians care about results, not your cheap rhetoric; not your confusing of facts. They want better health care, better education and more jobs. They know they'll get that from us, not from you, and they need to see one thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Attorney General. Nortel disabled retirees have been attempting to get the transcripts promised by a judge for the latest CCAA proceedings that dealt with health and welfare trust. Attorney General staff agreed to provide these documents and transcripts, but there's been a delay of six weeks. The request was made on October 13. Why has this minister not ensured that these transcripts were provided in a timely manner?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm not familiar with the time it will take to prepare the transcripts. Most of the time when you order transcripts, you depend on those who actually were in court, heard the evidence, needed to transcribe the evidence, got it checked, then got it approved by the presiding judge before it gets distributed.

We'll look into this and find out where it is, but the Attorney General does not have final say on the preparation of court transcripts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: These are disabled workers who have no money and are losing everything as they face today's deadline for the appeal for the court decision—today's deadline. They need these transcripts today; they needed them six weeks ago when they started asking for them.

Our staff contacted the ministry to ask for help, but received absolutely no co-operation for these desperate—and soon, destitute—disabled workers. Will the Attorney General finally support these disabled workers and provide these badly needed transcripts today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I appreciate the member's passion and I appreciate the question he is asking.

First of all, CCAA protection issues are federal government issues. That's number one. Secondly, the Nortel issue: Our government has stood with Nortel pensioners and supported them to a great extent. Third, in his first question, the member said that the ministry was already working to provide the transcripts and to assist with the transcripts, but they would take weeks. Fourth, I don't control the preparation of transcripts. Those are independent people for the most part. They type, they prepare, they transcribe, and then they get them approved by the presiding judge. That's not me.

So my friend's passion is misplaced. We'll do what we can to assist, but his passion is simply misplaced.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. On November 24, the member from Thornhill asked the minister a question and made statements about the chief of staff of York Central Hospital. The information presented wasn't accurate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that was directed at another member.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I withdraw.

As a member of this House and as someone who represents a neighbouring riding, I am very concerned about misinformation being spread in this House about someone who is doing important and good work in my community.

Can the minister please address this issue and correct the record about the chief of staff of York Central Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I, too, was appalled by the cynicism and the disparaging nature of the question from the member from Thornhill. Sadly, though, it was just another in a long list of examples of the drive-by smear campaign that seems to be now commonplace for the party opposite.

I believe that the member from Thornhill owes it to his constituents who are served by York Central Hospital to, at the very minimum, get his facts straight before he attacks the health care professionals there. The member's assertions related to what he called a salary bonus for the hospital's chief of staff. It is simply wrong. It was not a salary bonus; it was, in fact, a pay-for-performance award.

I would urge the member opposite to actually understand how hospitals work in this province. They understand the value of a pay-for-performance award—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Minister, for helping to clarify the issue that was raised in the House by the member from Thornhill.

It seems to me that York Central Hospital had an established pay-for-performance policy in place well before the passage of the Excellent Care for All Act, which targets a blend of Ministry of Health, LHIN and hospital priorities. I am proud of the leadership demonstrated by the hospital administration and medical staff, and I am also proud of the care that York Central Hospital provides to the growing population in my riding.

Can the minister please speak to the improvements in care that York Region residents now have access to?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just last week I had the wonderful honour of visiting York Central Hospital with many members of my caucus. It truly was a wonderful event. I was there to announce \$12 million in PCOP, post-construction operating, funding. This is funding that we provide to hospitals that have had a tremendous expansion, like York Central Hospital.

While I was there, I heard about the improvements to front-line health care. Indeed, I met a young mother who had spent two months in a coma from H1N1 who had recovered and was healthy again thanks to the front-line care she received at York Central Hospital.

Health care is getting better in the 905. We're making the investments to keep on making it better. We've made a lot of progress, but we've got plans to do a lot more.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, my constituents have been contacting me about police making traffic stops and laying charges based on a vehicle insurance database. A year ago, the member for Newmarket–Aurora asked you to investigate such a database, and you told the House that the database wasn't ready yet and that you wanted to spend more time to develop it and "get it right."

Minister, it's over a year later. Please tell us in the House, have you gotten it right yet?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If there's a specific case that the member would like me to look into, I can do that, but I assume what he's referencing is our work with the Insurance Bureau of Canada to make sure that insurance records are combined and that we can accurately assess, when people go to have their licence plates renewed, whether they have valid insurance or not. That work has been under way and we are ready to do that when people go to get their licences renewed.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, I'll have to inform the minister: While you've been taking your time getting it right, someone else has indeed done it. The Insurance Bureau of Canada and various police services, including the OPP, confirm that a private company, CGI, is providing the Insurance Bureau data to municipal and provincial police forces. The database, however, is inaccurate, out of date and the data corrupted, and it was never intended to be used for enforcement purposes. There have been numerous mistakes made by the police in its use, including impounding vehicles and false charges of driving without insurance. CGI is aware of these failings but has not stopped its use. Your inaction and incompetence has outfitted our police with faulty tools and they're charging people who have done nothing wrong.

Minister, are you asleep at the wheel? And how did you manage to miss what was going on in your own portfolio?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are wide awake and we are on this project. We are the first government that has worked to actually combine the databases to make it possible, when people go in to get their driver's licences and their val tags renewed, that we can actually make a validation of whether the driver has valid insurance or not. Up until now, that data has not even been available. We're not going to take any lessons from the party opposite on how to ensure that people have valid insurance.

We've been working with Insurance Bureau of Canada. MTO officials are working with the police service. There's a lot of data, obviously, to combine. We've been doing that, and people can rest assured that when they go in to have their val tag renewed, their insurance can be validated.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Why didn't the government act on numerous complaints and tips they received between 2005 and 2007 about financial improprieties at the Niagara Parks Commission?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about NPC, the Niagara Parks Commission.

Our government is taking action. We are moving forward to restore public confidence, to bring greater accountability and to bring greater transparency. We are having a close look at practices at NPC, everything from travel and meals to hospitality expenses for senior management. As we move forward, I have full confidence in Chair Fay Booker to take all the necessary actions to strengthen this important government agency. She understands that we need to drive change so that the agency operates in a manner that is accountable and transparent to all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question was, why was the government missing in action from 2005 to 2007? With every passing day, Ontario families learn more of scandals at the Niagara Parks Commission. First it was sole-source deals. Then it was expensive Vegas vacations. Now we're learning that the government and the former Minister of Tourism had information about improprieties but didn't act on them for four years.

Why did this government ignore the voices of concern and sit by while the Niagara Parks Commission unravelled at the seams?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. We are moving ahead. These changes are far-reaching. We are looking at everything from procurement of governance. We are looking at everything from travel and meals to hospitality expenses for senior management. Our actions will move the commission forward to bring greater accountability, to bring greater transparency.

I have, one more time, full confidence in the new chair, Fay Booker, a chair that is knowledgeable and experienced, and someone who is determined to strengthen the commission and to make it transparent and accountable to all Ontarians.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Literacy is a basic skill I know we all feel is essential for any individual to master in order to become a confident and productive member of society. In fact, literacy remains a key skill that Ontarians need to compete for jobs in today's economy.

Minister, what commitment has this government made to the investment of literacy education in this province?

Hon. John Milloy: Obviously, literacy is a key part of our educational agenda over here. I'm very pleased that

this year, the literacy and basic skills program, including academic upgrading, helped over 61,000 learners, with 72% of exiting learners going on to further education and employment.

There is a concern, though. Due to the federal stimulus funding which came to the province of Ontario, this past year we were able to provide service to an extra 13,000 individuals. Unfortunately, this stimulus funding is coming to an end at the end of March. This government, and I call on all members of the Legislature, is calling on the federal government to continue this funding and to recognize that the effects of the recession are not going to somehow magically end on March 31 of next year. We've been—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: As I understand it, the stimulus funding from the federal government not only affects literacy funding but a whole range of other programs. I am deeply concerned for students in this province, and certainly in my riding, who have trouble finding work, which, as we know, helps them to pay for their schooling and living expenses during the academic—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable members who are offering interjections in the chamber today that if they're so engaged in some of these issues, perhaps during their morning question period pitches they should be pitching for these questions so that they can directly ask these questions.

Please continue.

Mr. Jim Brownell: According to Statistics—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable members on all sides within the House—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need help from the member from Sault Ste. Marie, I believe that was.

Please continue.

Mr. Jim Brownell: According to Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate of full-time Canadian students between the ages of 15 and 24 was reported in 2009 to be over 18%.

Minister, what are you doing to help students find employment?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I've been very proud that this year we invested over \$90 million to help 107,000 young people benefit from summer employment opportunities. But once again, due to the partnership with the federal government—part of this funding came from federal stimulus funding, which they are threatening to end at the end of March. In fact, if they do pull it, it could jeopardize 37,000 young workers who would not be able to benefit from our summer employment program.

Once again, we appreciate the support of the federal government over the last two years, but I think it's incumbent upon every member of this Legislature to send a very strong signal to Ottawa to say that the effects of

the recession in Ontario are not going to end on March 31 of next year and we urge them to continue support for Ontario workers and for Ontario young people.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. During the minister's recent visit to Durham region and in her answer to my question on October 20, she maintains that she did not breach the agreement entered into between the McGuinty government and the federal government with respect to Highway 407. The Flow agreement dictates that Highway 407 must be completed to Highway 35/115 by 2013, yet the minister has now admitted this might not happen for more than a decade. She blamed the economy, saying, "Infrastructure was our priority before the downturn hit."

Minister, you had the money to take out a billion-dollar energy loan. You had a billion dollars to squander on the eHealth scandal. The federal government has been able to hold up their end of the Flow agreement. Why won't you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to welcome the folks from Durham region here today. I know that this road is very important to people who live in Durham. I know it's very important to people who live in Kawartha and Peterborough, which is why we are going to build the 407 to 35/115. That's what we're going to do. The environmental assessment has been done. The road will be built in stages, as I said to the folks in Durham. There will be 13,000 jobs created as we build this highway. The shovels will go in the ground in 2012. The road will be built in stages, as the first 407 was built in stages.

1130

I think, given the economic downturn, this is a very good-news announcement. The fact that we're going ahead with the 407—I've driven the road. We're building the busiest section first, and we're going to be working with the mayors to look at the traffic flow issue—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: It has come to our attention that landowners east of Oshawa's Simcoe Street are having their properties expropriated. If the McGuinty government is not able to finish the 407 extension to Highway 35/115 right now, then why is the land being expropriated, and why are residents being told that they have to be out of their properties by this spring?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You actually can't have it both ways: Either we are going to build to 35/115 or we're not. The fact that we are working on land acquisition means—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to remind the members that the Speaker is hosting the pages for lunch today, and they're very hungry.

Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In order to build a road, you actually need land and you need a plan. We are in the process of executing that plan, so we do have to acquire land.

But one of the things I have to say, as the Minister of Transportation, that I think about consistently on this file, is, what if we had retained possession of the 407? What if the 407 had not been sold off in a fire sale? What if we had been able to work on the 407 as a provincial asset all these years? The party opposite sold out the 407 in a fire sale. We're going to build it to 35/115.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. In 2008, you promised your bill would allow part-time college workers the right to bargain collectively. It is almost 2011, and those workers are still not allowed to do so because the colleges are circumventing the rules. You're happy to let this charade continue while thousands of votes remain in sealed ballot boxes. Where is your plan to make colleges respect your bill?

Hon. John Milloy: I was very proud when this Legislature passed legislation which allows the unionization of part-time college workers. The matter that the member is raising is, right now, as he knows, before the Ontario Labour Relations Board. I would also think that he would know, as a former minister, that it's inappropriate for myself or the Minister of Labour, or any other minister, to comment on a matter that's before the board. We will allow the parties to work it out with the assistance of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and leave it to that body, where it should rest, and not here in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We're allowing them to work it out and it's two long years, so long that the International Labour Organization has also taken notice of this—again—with respect to the minister's reluctance to help workers. Recently, the ILO took this very minister to task by stating that they regret that the government provides no observations on the complainant's allegation that mediation and costly litigation at the OLRB can take months, if not years.

It's no wonder colleges resort to these stalling tactics; they're broke. They're frightened because Ontario gives less money to its colleges per full-time equivalent than PEI does. But it's not the fault of workers that colleges are underfunded. When will you allow these workers to organize so that your bill can pass in a way of which you are proud? When are you going to make it happen?

Hon. John Milloy: I find it passing strange to have a member of a party which cut funding to our institutions, which cut student aid and which made post-secondary education the bottom of their priority list stand up and talk about funding to our colleges and universities. I am very, very proud of this government's record when it comes to post-secondary education and the significant in-

vestments that have been made, and also the changes that we've made to labour legislation around part-time college workers.

There is a process before the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and I think that member should respect the fact that the purpose of the board, which was established by this Legislature, is to deal with disputes such as the one that he is referring to and not play cheap politics by raising it here, when he knows that no minister can comment on a proceeding that is in front of the board.

DEFERRED VOTES

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to the motion relating to negotiations with the federal government on a comprehensive new agreement to provide funding, planning, and governance for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour of Mr. Hudak's amendment will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hampton, Howard

Hardeman, Emie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John

Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mori, Reza

Murray, Glen R.
Oraziotti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 28; the nays are 52.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment lost.

Amendment negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome guests here today seated in the Speaker's gallery for the Robert Macaulay tribute. Welcome to Hugh Macaulay, his brother; Paul Bordonaro; and welcome back to the Legislature to Clare Westcott. It's a pleasure to have you back, sir.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EGG FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm happy to rise today to thank the Egg Farmers of Ontario for coming to Queen's Park this morning to provide members with a great omelette breakfast and to let them know what is going on in their industry. This is the 13th annual egg farmers' breakfast at Queen's Park, and the turnout was great, as usual.

Recently, the egg farmers began a campaign to promote awareness of our made-in-Ontario eggs and to highlight some of the great people involved in egg farming in the province. I know how hard our farmers work, and it's great that, through this campaign, people across Ontario will get to hear their stories. I want to commend them on a job well done. I also want to congratulate them on their continued commitment to research and innovation as well as food safety and quality.

The Egg Farmers of Ontario are a great example of an industry that has taken steps to ensure a perfect balance is struck between the quality, availability and safety of their product. Eggs are a great choice for a healthy, active lifestyle. They are low in calories, high in protein and contain all nine essential amino acids.

But eggs are not only an important part of our diets; they are also an important part of our agricultural and provincial economy. That's why Tim Hudak and the PC caucus are proud to support our chicken farmers and supply management or—a better name—orderly marketing.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I want to thank the Egg Farmers of Ontario for coming here today, and I want to encourage everyone to talk to an egg farmer today and to watch for the campaign to hear more of their stories.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Kormos: There's a scam, one amongst many, that's travelling the province and North America right now. It's the Yellow Pages scam.

A fraudulent company called yellowpages-ontario.com is sending out fake invoices to businesses. The businesses, relying upon them as being the invoice for their Yellow Pages listing out of Montreal, are paying the invoice and then getting the traditional zero, nada, nothing—getting ripped off.

A small business operator down on 7th Street in Welland, a business that I know well, received an invoice. This is a small business, family-run and -operated. They got scammed by yellowpages-ontario.com. They came to our office, my constituency office, and we were proud to help them, only to learn that consumer protection here in Ontario does not extend to small businesses.

The ministry, in one email, said, "The Consumer Protection Act, 2002, does not apply to business-to-business transactions, so regrettably the ministry cannot assist in resolving the dispute." When is a small business not a consumer?

This Liberal government talks a big game, but when it comes down to really helping small businesses in this province, it does zip. It turns its back on them. To suggest that somehow this small business person's business is not a consumer when it's getting ripped off by fraud artists like yellowpages-ontario.com is absurd, stupid and nuts.

I say it's time for the minister to step up to the plate, do the right thing, get involved and protect people and victims like this small business.

ORLÉANS PEOPLE'S CHOICE BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr. Phil McNeely: On November 18, members of the Orléans Chamber of Commerce gathered at the Camelot golf club for the 12th annual Orléans People's Choice Business Awards.

Small businesses are the backbone of Ontario's economy. This is especially true in Orléans, where small businesses employ thousands of local residents, businesses such as Cheddar Et Cetera, which was named retail business of the year, and Boston Pizza, which received the award for restaurant of the year.

The Orléans People's Choice Business Awards also recognized the efforts of the men and women behind these successful businesses, people like 29-year-old entrepreneur Cristie Vito, from Stellar Events, who received the young business person of the year award this year; and Dr. Michael Mattinen, who was named business person of the year.

Among the 10 businesses and business owners who were honoured at the awards gala were Jason Pilon and Leam Hamilton, from Pilon Hamilton Real Estate, who received the customer service award, and La Coccinelle daycare, which earned the community support award. Portobello Manor received the award for new business of the year. Cuisine et Passion was named family business of the year. Bryan Castilla received the award for professional of the year. Last but by no means least, Geraldine Dixon from Access Print Imaging was named corporate citizen of the year.

Congratulations to this year's recipients. I know you will join me in wishing them continued success in the future.

Félicitations aux récipiendaires de cette année, et ensemble souhaitons-leur un succès continu dans leur avenir.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O'Toole: Citizens from across Durham region have come to Queen's Park today to urge Premier McGuinty to be a man of his word and to fulfill his numerous promises to complete the Highway 407 extension east 50 kilometres, right to 35/115.

I'd like to welcome Oshawa mayor John Gray—this is his last day as mayor—along with Corinna Traill, duly elected, as well as Rosemary McConkey, who is one of the lead organizers, Mark Canning, and Jeremy Woodcock. I'd also like to thank the work done in the past by those who are not here: Mayor-elect Adrian Foster, as well as outgoing mayor Jim Abernethy.

By not completing the 407 extension as promised, this government is costing residents jobs and costing businesses tens of millions of dollars in lost revenue. Shameful. The region will lose \$433 million, and Durham estimates that by not completing the 407, 3,945 years of employment will be lost; plus, there will be a 10% increase in municipal taxes because of maintenance and work that will be required. How many residents will pay for your HST, eco tax and expensive energy experiments if they don't have jobs?

The broken promise of the Premier has a real consequence to business. Every day, 1,500 trucks work through the area. This is lost revenue.

The McGuinty government's failure to keep its promise is troubling and worrying at this time. It will cost us everything and, most of all, it will cost the Premier because he's a man who will not keep his word.

PINE RIVER BRIDGE

Mr. Bill Mauro: Neebing is a municipality in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan and has some of the most beautiful country and scenery you are going to find anywhere.

With roughly 2,100 residents, Neebing is a relatively small municipality in terms of population, but geographically it's a very large municipality and, as such, it has a great deal of road and bridge infrastructure to create and maintain with a very limited residential tax base.

That's why it was a very good day recently when, along with Mayor Steve Harosen, councillors Roger Schott, Bev Mercier, Maureen Schmidt, Dawne Kilgour and other municipal representatives, I took great pleasure in announcing the opening of the Pine River Bridge.

Our government contributed over \$400,000 to this \$1.2-million project. This is an example of infrastructure that likely could not have been built without the support of other levels of government.

In fact, the bridge was closed for roughly 18 years. The closure forced residents to take much longer commutes, leading to an additional cost for the municipality in terms of snow removal and road maintenance and, more importantly, serious delays in emergency situations, especially for the fire service. All of these problems have now been fixed.

The municipality of Neebing has been very aggressive in addressing their infrastructure needs. The Sturgeon Bay Road, which received \$1.4 million from our government, is another good example of their advocacy.

It's been a great pleasure for me to work with them, and I congratulate them on their foresight in meeting their municipal needs.

CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On behalf of the PC caucus, it's my pleasure to welcome the Canadian Hearing Society to the Legislature today.

Since its founding in 1940, the society has become a leading provider of services, products and information that remove barriers to communication, advance hearing health and promote equity for people who are culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing. They were last here in May to discuss a vitally important issue: the need for visual fire alarms.

Those of us who have met with members of the Canadian Hearing Society know their members work hard day after day to advocate on behalf of their clients, facilitating fair and equal access to all aspects of life, including employment, education, recreation, housing, health care and social services. They are able to do this by offering a wide range of services across the country which support equality and inclusion for the deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing. These services include audiology, mental health and addiction counselling, employment services, sign-language interpreting and instruction, and many more, because time doesn't me permit me to list an entire list. But the Canadian Hearing Society continues to break down barriers on behalf of their deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing clients. I commend and thank them for the important work they do day after day on behalf of our communities.

KENT AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME

Mr. Pat Hoy: Recently, eight individuals were inducted into the Kent Agricultural Hall of Fame. The hall of fame recognizes the sacrifices, ingenuity and plain hard work of present and past generations to agriculture.

Marg Nauta of the Merlin area: She has had a lifetime of service to 4H, to education and to senior citizens. She follows the example of her father, Peter Lugtheid, an earlier inductee into the hall of fame.

Peter Hensel of the Dover area: He had the unique distinction of being nominated for the hall of fame by the board of directors of Tahgahoning Enterprises after serving as their farm manager.

The late William Albert Chrysler and his son, the late C. Ernest Chrysler: They were outstanding beekeepers, developing innovative equipment still used today.

1510

The late George Alan Fisher of Ridgetown: He was an agricultural ministry farm economist responsible for cost-of-production studies that took much of the guesswork out of agriculture. He was also the valued treasurer for many years of the agricultural hall of fame committee.

There were two brothers inducted: the late John C. Lee of Ridgetown and the late George E. Lee. They raised top-quality livestock on Leeland Farms, carrying on the high standards of their father, Herb Lee, who was also inducted into the hall of fame earlier.

Lastly, the late Harold Webster: He started from modest beginnings and went on to become an agricultural entrepreneur and founder of St. Clair Grain and of other projects that benefited thousands of farmers.

Our government is proud to recognize these leaders and innovators of rural Ontario communities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Yesterday, I attended the announcement for the launch of the government's new long-term affordable housing strategy in Hamilton. It was an exciting day. The housing advocates in Hamilton lined up to speak to the plan presented. They stressed the importance of strong partnerships and collaboration, and there was very much a sense of excitement and support for the strategy.

I want to give special mention to a wonderful person, Paul Johnson, the director of neighbourhood development strategies in the city of Hamilton, who has been an integral part of developing sustainable housing for the residents of Hamilton. Here's what he said: "Consolidating existing funding portfolios will provide opportunities for communities to develop innovative solutions that will ensure stronger outcomes for the unique needs of the people they serve. This new funding flexibility will assist communities to deliver high-impact investments that maximize the resources available."

Additionally, Barb Millsap, president of the Ontario co-op housing council, had this to say: "We have called on the McGuinty government to make a renewed commitment to community-based affordable housing...." The affordable housing strategy "is very good news for housing co-ops. The government deserves a lot of credit for listening."

EGG FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Jeff Leal: On behalf of the government of Ontario, I'm pleased to rise today and thank the Egg Farmers of Ontario for coming to Queen's Park to host their 13th annual omelette breakfast and let us know what's going on in their industry.

I'm proud Ontario is a home to some of the world's most delicious, healthy and nutritious eggs, and proud to support Ontario's egg farmers. Through their hard work

and dedication, Ontario's egg farmers, processors and the Egg Farmers of Ontario's leadership all make Ontario a great success.

We also know that supply management plays an important role in that success. It brings stability to the industry, provides opportunities for growth and contributes to a strong economy, which is why our government is a strong, unwavering supporter of this system.

I'd also like to thank the Egg Farmers of Ontario for working so closely with our government. With their help, we've put together a winning proposal to modernize regulation on eggs and processing eggs, while making sure that food safety remains a number one priority.

The Egg Farmers of Ontario work hard to help Ontarians appreciate that with eggs in their fridge they can always make a fast, nutritious meal. But eggs are not only an important part of a balanced diet, they're also an important part of our agri-food industry and the province's economy.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la politique sociale et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy, move its adoption and send it to you by way of page Emily.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector /
Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 4, 2010, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Orazietti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts /
Projet de loi 110,

Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'll make my statement during ministers' statements.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 58 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ROBERT MACAULAY

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Robert Macaulay.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party of Ontario to speak about

Robert Macaulay. I want to say that it is a name that is not unknown to many members in this assembly, even though he served here many, many years ago, back in the mid-1950s and the early 1960s. Mr. Macaulay would have been a name that a lot of people would have heard, being not only a minister of the crown but somebody who, quite frankly, was very innovative in his time, considering the days that he served in this Legislature.

He comes from a family who understood what it was to serve. I understand that his father, Leopold, was also a member of this assembly at a point before that. I'm not sure what riding it was, but I'm sure somebody will mention that. Obviously, the issue of public service was one that was understood. The call was heard in that he came before this Legislature in order to serve.

He was also a soldier. He served back in the Second World War with the 48th Highlanders of Canada, served with distinction in the army with the Canadian Armed Forces, and then was a lawyer who practised for, God, about a half a century. He was known as a brilliant, very effective lawyer in that community. More importantly, he was a husband and a father, and he is missed. He was predeceased by all except his daughter, Leslea, who is still living.

He then came to this Legislature and served in a riding that is not unknown to my seatmate here, Mr. Peter Tabuns, who wanted to be here today. Unfortunately, he has a cold, as many other people are getting in this Legislature. I've got two glasses of water and a Halls to prove I'm the next one, so I'm not sitting next to him for very much longer. Mr. Tabuns wanted to be here, and unfortunately cannot be here, because he is in the same seat that Mr. Macaulay had served some years ago.

When you look back and you read what was said about Mr. Macaulay in the newspapers of the day and you take a look at what's here in the archives of the assembly, but more importantly you talk to people who have been around here, he was quite innovative. He was a hard-working member who understood what it was to represent his constituency, but he also was the type of guy who had a lot of ideas. He is known as somebody who didn't want to just come here, serve and be another seat in the House. He wanted to be here, and he wanted to be more than just a seat; he wanted to help shape the agenda of Ontario and worked quite hard, first as a backbencher within the Conservative government of the day, but then, more importantly, as a cabinet minister, where he challenged, pushed, prodded and did all of the things that had to be done as a good member of this assembly and a member of the cabinet to move forward issues that were important to him and that, more importantly, at the end of the day, put us in a position in Ontario today that we now take for granted.

Natural gas: Who would remember that it was Mr. Macaulay at the time that he was Minister of Energy Resources who said that it was important that we adopt a policy in this province to establish natural gas across our communities to heat our homes? Back then, some of you might remember—some of us are old enough to remem-

ber—wood and coal were used as a primary source of heat in many communities across Ontario. There were many communities like mine and others that did not have natural gas. It was this foresight of the energy resources minister of the time, in the government of the day, under the leadership of this minister, Mr. Macaulay, that enabled them to push forward with that whole agenda so that today we're able to take for granted what was not taken for granted back then.

1520

He then moved on to the portfolio of our good friend from Windsor—whatever the riding is. He was the Minister of Economics and Development. He understood something that we as New Democrats understand so well: The way you pay for the programs that are so necessary for the citizens of this province, such as health care and education, which he was a member of, many of the innovative changes that happened and were put in place that we take for granted today, have to be funded. He understood that it wasn't necessarily by raising taxes that you got the money, but you went out and built the revenue. He understood that as a Minister of Economics and Development, and was very active in helping build the revenue for the people of this province by making sure that the businesses of Ontario back then were able to benefit by expanding exports from the province of Ontario into other countries like Mexico, to Europe and various countries around the world.

As Minister of Economics and Development, he established trade offices in many countries around the world but helped our manufacturers become better exporters, and by making them better exporters, he built the revenue here in Ontario that governments since then and today—well, maybe a little bit less today, but up until recently because of what we've seen in the downturn of the economy—have been able to benefit from in order to get the revenue that we need to pay for things like health care, education and others.

He is certainly an interesting person in the sense that I've got to say a couple of things very quickly—I saw a quote from Bill Davis, and it really struck me. What I didn't know is that Bill Davis was the campaign chair for Mr. Macaulay when he ran for the leadership of the Conservative Party back in 1961. The fact that he went and got Bill Davis tells me that he knew how to pick a winner, and he was able to recognize good talent at the time, as Mr. Davis ended up becoming Premier here, as we all know, and is revered even today as one of the better Premiers of the province of Ontario.

I just want to end. I know I'm going a little bit over, but I think colleagues will let me do this for a few minutes, because there's so much to say about Mr. Macaulay. He was really an innovator, and I think that's the point that we need to understand. He was somebody who understood that at the end of the day, you need to be able to push forward the agenda in order to make this province a better place to live. He was here at a time when there was no support for members, and I want to end on this point because I think this is important to say.

Members back in the day of Mr. Macaulay—never mind that they didn't have constituency offices, never mind that they didn't have staff—didn't even have an office in this Legislature. Their office was this desk, and Mr. Macaulay ran his ministry, yes, through the ministry, but ran his constituency and did much of the work that he had to do here in the Legislature at his desk.

He was served by somebody who is here today and I just want to signal Mr. Clare Westcott, who was a former aide and good friend to Mr. Macaulay, who served him well and served others, and I also want to take the opportunity to say, on behalf of New Democrats, a good day to Mr. Westcott, along with Hugh Macaulay and Paul Bordonaro, who was a long-time friend. On behalf of Andrea Horwath and New Democrats, we say to the family and friends of Mr. Macaulay: a person we will miss, a person who served well, and we are so grateful that this man was able to serve the people of Ontario.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I too would like to welcome to the House Hugh Macaulay, Mr. Macaulay's brother, Paul Bordonaro and, of course, Clare Westcott, who told me as we were coming in today that he worked in this place from I believe it was 1951 to 1985, so the stories he has to tell I'm sure are legion. I know that Mr. Westcott served with Mr. Macaulay during part of that time and also served a number of Premiers.

Mr. Robert William Macaulay was born in May 1921, and he passed away in August this year. He was the member for Riverdale from November 1951 until May 1964. He was elected when he was around 30 and retired at 43 from this place.

I had the privilege of speaking to one of our former resident historians Sean Conway this morning, who provided me with some insight into the experiences of Mr. Macaulay during that time. He came from a very political family. His father, Leopold Macaulay, had been elected from York South. He was a provincial cabinet minister under Premiers Ferguson and Henry. He was a fourth-place contender in the Progressive Conservative leadership convention in 1936.

He came from the Conservative elite. He was educated at Upper Canada College. He went to U of T. He went to Osgoode Hall and was called to the bar in 1948. He served overseas in Toronto's 48th Highlanders during World War II.

He had a very distinguished career. He was elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1951, as I said, and re-elected in 1955, 1959 and 1963. He was brought into cabinet in 1958 as a minister without portfolio, and moved into the Ministry of Energy Resources in 1959, until 1961.

Mr. Macaulay was linked very closely to two Premiers, one of whom he helped become Premier and one who he brought along, who later became Premier.

In his book *The Power and the Tories: Ontario Politics—1943 to the Present*, Jonathan Manthorpe discusses some of Mr. Robarts's leadership and his rise to the premiership, and in that context he talks about Mr. Macaulay. Mr. Robarts and Mr. Macaulay were both elected in 1951. In 1961, they were both serving in cabinet at the time that Mr. Frost announced he was

going to step down from the leadership. There is lots of discussion about Mr. Robarts's leadership convention, but when they finally get to the convention time in Mr. Manthorpe's book, he refers to it as follows: "The delegates were faced with a problem as they filed into the arena on the warm, wet afternoon of October 25. The main problem was the long shadow of Leslie Frost, whom many delegates thought irreplaceable. Some thought that the best bet was to elect one of Frost's protégés, James Allan, the provincial treasurer and an old-man-Ontario type, for a few years until a new man could be groomed."

He goes on to discuss some of the other candidates, and then writes, "For the delegates who cared to take a chance that Wednesday, there was the magical, mercurial Robert Macaulay, a man whose aura was clearly visible even to those without the slightest psychic tendencies. Against this varied and colourful field, John Robarts did not stand out. He was everyone's second choice."

He then goes on to discuss a bit of the leadership race and goes on to say, "After the first ballot was counted in mid-afternoon, Kelso Roberts was in the lead, with Robarts second and Macaulay third. Robarts was doing better than anyone had imagined...."

"As the voting went on through the afternoon, Robarts maintained the lead but not by much. The break came at the end of the fifth ballot when, as low man on the totem pole, it was Macaulay's turn to be dropped before the next vote. His supporters were numerous enough to give the victory to whichever of the two remaining contenders he guided them towards. The crucial decision was his."

"Macaulay was perplexed and upset at his own defeat and he stood silent for a few moments, his forehead creased." He conferred with his campaign manager, William Davis, who went on to become, as my colleague noted, a respected Premier of this province.

"Macaulay turned to those around him and said, 'Go tell our people to vote for Robarts. We don't want Robarts.' With that he left his seat, and strode smilingly over to Robarts. He greeted Robarts warmly, pointed to the campaign button that Robarts was wearing, and said, 'Hang it on me, John.' Robarts was only too happy to oblige."

Mr. Manthorpe then goes on to describe some of the public service that Mr. Macaulay provided to this province as the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Economic Trade and Development and, as he was known to some around this place at that time, the minister of everything.

He went on trade crusades. He urged the people of the province to buy Ontario products and provided financial incentives to industry to come to the province. It worked well and it improved both the balance of trade and the employment picture of the province.

Macaulay's frenzied expenditure of energy appeared to take a toll on his health, as is noted in Mr. Manthorpe's book, and in 1963 he did collapse on his way into the Legislature and that brought him to his retirement.

There is a story in Mr. Manthorpe's book that I just want to read into the record because I looked to Mr.

Westcott for a little direction on this. In his book, Mr. Manthorpe tells us that when Mr. Macaulay collapsed in the Legislature, Mr. Westcott ran over and covered his shoes because on the bottom of the soles it said "Made in Italy." I don't know if that's true, Mr. Westcott, but I think it's a tremendous story and a statement to your service to the province of Ontario, as well as to the commitment of Mr. Macaulay to his trade mission.

It has been suggested that he could have been a great leader. He was bright, articulate, ambitious, and some say theatrical. He was a powerful minister. He was determined to do great things in this province. He was, in fact, the minister of everything, and I think we owe the Macaulay family a great debt of gratitude for the years that he devoted to this province, for the years he devoted to this Legislature, to the province in his practice of law, and to his service of his fellow Ontarian. So to the Macaulay family, on behalf of the McGuinty government, I send our condolences and I thank you very much.

1530

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's truly an honour to stand here today and pay tribute to Robert Macaulay on behalf of Tim Hudak, our leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and our caucus members.

Robert Macaulay was the MPP for Riverdale from 1951 to 1964 and he served in four Parliaments: the 24th, the 25th, the 26th and the 27th.

Our guests have been mentioned a few times today. I had an opportunity to meet with them earlier down in the lobby. I did want to say again that Hugh Macaulay, the brother of Robert, is here. We've done a lot of talking about Robert so far, but one must remember that Hugh was the chairman of Ontario Hydro. I asked Hugh when I first got here, "How long were you there for?" And he said, "Just before they started putting the prices up."

Clare Westcott, an executive assistant to Robert Macaulay, finished his career as deputy minister to Premier William Davis. Hugh says, in some notes I got from him, that Mr. Westcott is the most knowledgeable person in the province on the workings of the province of Ontario.

I have some notes here and a lot of the things that I had originally were mentioned by my two colleagues from the other parties, but I wanted to mention some comments that have come from Hugh.

He was the son of Hazel and Leopold Macaulay; he had an older sister, now deceased, and a younger brother. He attended Humewood public school, Upper Canada College, the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall. He served overseas in World War II with the 48th Highlanders. He was called to the Ontario bar in 1949 and began the practice of law with his father, who had been an MPP—that's Leopold—for York South from the mid 1920s to the mid 1940s, and a member of the Conservative cabinets of Ferguson and Henry. He was also Tory leader in the House after the defeat of the Henry government in 1932. Again, as we mentioned, he contested the Tory leadership which was won by Earl Rowe. It's mentioned that Bob cut his Tory teeth helping his father run in the late 1930s and the early 1940s.

While in the early years of law practice, Bob entered politics. He won Riverdale in 1951 during the Premier Frost era and was appointed to the Frost cabinet in the mid 1950s. During that era and the early years of the Robarts government, he had a number of major cabinet jobs and, as Ms. Smith said, he had the fictitious title of the minister of everything.

When Frost quit in 1961, Bob contested the leadership. It was won by his long-term friend and earlier Toronto roommate John Robarts. He had some serious illnesses in the 1960s. He retired from politics and, after a lengthy recovery, he continued to practise law for the next 40 years.

Late in his legal career, he was appointed chairman of the Ontario Energy Board, the provincial energy regulatory agency, in which he served with distinction. Incidentally, he was appointed by the non-Tory government of the day—Bob Rae.

He was married in the 1950s to Joy Wecker; they had two children—Leslea, and a son who predeceased Bob. Joy predeceased Bob by several years.

During his legal career, Bob became a recognized authority on mechanics' liens and authored reference books on the subject, which he continued to the time of his death. He was a collector of antique porcelain as well as important art.

I think we've mentioned a number of the ministries that he served on with passion. I can tell you, going over his biography here, I wouldn't begin to—there are pages and pages of committees that he sat on for different pieces of legislation. That alone tells you the work ethic.

You might say, "Why is the member from Simcoe North bringing a tribute to Robert Macaulay?" First of all, Hugh's daughter Barbara Hacker is married to Fred Hacker of Hacker Gignac Rice, one of the prime law firms in Simcoe county. I have to say, they're Tories, very good supporters of mine. I called Barb and asked her about Robert and she told me about her dad coming down. We really appreciate the fact that you are all here today and I know other members of the family would have liked to have been here as well.

Ladies and gentlemen, what we've seen here, knowing the kind of family the Hackers are and what kind of person Barb Macaulay is, and knowing that the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree with you and Robert—you just know the kind of hard-working people that they are in the province of Ontario. That's what this biography tells us. It's all about Robert. He's someone who dedicated his life to this place and succeeded in a very, very positive and fulfilling manner.

I just want to say, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Tim and our caucus, we want to pay a special thank you to you folks for coming today. To your whole family, thank you for the many, many years of service and making Ontario a better place to be, and thank you again so much for your attendance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the honourable members for their tributes to former member Macaulay, and I want to take this opportunity to

thank his brother and friends who are here today to hear this tribute. We say thank you for coming. Copies of the Hansard of today's tribute will be sent to you. We'll ensure that there are extra copies that can be distributed to other family members and friends who couldn't be present today. Thank you all very much for your attendance.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Before I begin, I would like to introduce three people in the gallery here who have joined us for this. Dr. Arlene King, our chief medical officer of health, is here, as is Gillian MacDonald and Jason Stanley, both from her office.

Today, I'm introducing legislation to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act, or HPPA. I'm pleased to inform the House that this government is proposing to take three steps to strengthen Ontario's response to future major public health events and emergencies, such as a pandemic.

What we're doing today is making sure Ontario is better coordinated and better prepared for the next major emergency. No doubt, the H1N1 influenza pandemic was the biggest health issue of 2009. Public health units across Ontario worked hard to implement the largest mass immunization program ever. Overall, Ontario fared very well during the recent H1N1 pandemic, and I want to thank the local medical officers of health and the province's health care professionals who responded so professionally. But there were challenges and there were lessons learned, and it's our responsibility to act on those lessons.

In her preliminary report on the H1N1 response, released last June, Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, recommended a strong, centralized approach to pandemic response, one that existing legislation does not permit. She suggested that the chief medical officer of health have the authority to direct public health units in real time, so today we're taking action.

The proposed legislation would provide greater support to local public health units and enable them to respond with greater consistency. There are times when the public would benefit from more clarity and a standardized approach.

Ontario has one of the most decentralized public health systems in the country, and while we value this unique, decentralized model, during the next major emergency, Ontarians could all benefit by being sheltered under one big umbrella as opposed to many different ones across the province. Overall, the proposed amendments would strengthen the province's ability to plan,

manage and respond to future pandemics; to provincial, national or international public health events; and other emergencies that affect the health of Ontarians.

Specifically, the amendments propose to create a new authority for the chief medical officer of health. The proposed legislation would give the chief medical officer of health enhanced oversight authority to help ensure that Ontario's response is better coordinated. This new authority would be used only under limited and specific circumstances.

If the legislation is passed, the CMOH would have the authority to direct boards of health and local medical officers of health to adopt measures during a future public health emergency, if he or she feels that Ontarians would be better protected by a coordinated response to an outbreak or emerging public health event. Such directives could be enforced for six months, or less if the CMOH decided, and such directives would be limited to very specific situations; for example, infectious diseases, environmental health and public health emergency preparedness. The proposed amendments would also ensure that the appointments of acting medical officers of health are approved by the CMOH and the minister. Finally, the amendments would expand the minister's power to use a public space on the advice of the CMOH for public health purposes; for example, holding an immunization clinic.

1540

The proposed legislation is part of this government's larger plan to enhance the way we respond to future public health events or emergencies. Our plan also includes a renewal of the Ontario health plan for an influenza pandemic. Ontario will continue to take steps towards implementing Panorama, a pan-Canadian initiative that will improve public health surveillance and enhance the province's capacity to deliver immunization programs.

I'm proud of this government's record of having a real commitment to public health in Ontario. These actions will help us continue to strengthen our pandemic planning and our preparedness for future public health emergencies.

We know it is not a question of whether there will be another public health emergency; it's a question of when. The H1N1 pandemic was not as severe as it could have been. The next one could be worse.

The proposed legislation would add to the many important tools already in place and enhance our response to public health threats. Our proposed amendments and other coordinated steps are vital in ensuring that Ontario's highly regarded public health system continues to promote and protect the health of Ontarians. I urge all members to support this bill.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus in response to the statement by the Minister of Health concerning the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act. Unfortunately, as has become the norm here, I am responding to a

piece of legislation that has just now been delivered to me, so I'm a little bit short on details.

In any event, as I understand it, this legislation would allow the chief medical officer of health to direct boards of health and medical officers during public health emergencies. These directives would only be given during situations where the chief medical officer of health believes that certain actions would protect the health and safety of Ontarians.

As the members of this Legislature will recall, one of the largest news items from last year was the story of H1N1. This past summer, Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, released a report on Ontario's handling of the pandemic entitled *The H1N1 Pandemic—How Ontario Fared*.

Dr. King identified our strengths, which included international as well as federal-provincial collaboration starting from the World Health Organization; a quick response and delivery of vaccine to remote and northern communities; and the fact that schools were able to remain open and provide a consistent message of health and safety. On the other hand, a lot also went wrong. I'm sure all of us can recall lineups of people spilling outside of vaccination centres where high-risk groups stood in the rain for hours and were often turned away and asked to return the following day, just in an effort to be vaccinated. Vaccination was inconsistent across regions in Ontario.

At the time, the Minister of Health defended the province's vaccination rollout strategy, saying it was up to local officials to coordinate the mass immunization. I am encouraged to see that the minister listened to the chief medical officer of health and has realized the need for better coordination and a hierarchy in health crisis situations such as the H1N1 crisis.

Another issue which Dr. King identified was Ontario's capacity to deliver the vaccine. As Dr. King identified in her report, "Simply put, perhaps because we have had 10 years' experience ... delivering a universal seasonal flu immunization program, we believed that we would be able to easily deliver a pandemic vaccine. As it turns out, that was a little like assuming that because you take a brisk walk every morning, you could compete in the Olympic 100-yard dash."

As a result, Dr. King's recommendation at the conclusion of the report included, number 1, extending the chain of command to the local level. In her report she advised, "The chief medical officer of health must have the authority to direct public health units in real time as he or she sees fit. That authority didn't exist during this pandemic. I or my successor needs to have it the next time around."

Number 2 is the implementation of Panorama, a pan-Canadian solution that will allow us to track who is getting immunized and when, which has been in development since SARS. It does appear from the ministry's website that the chief medical officer's concerns have been considered and that the province intends to continue

to take steps to work towards the implementation of Panorama. That has been confirmed by the minister herself today.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the chief medical officer of health and her staff, as well as the health care professionals across Ontario who went above and beyond in their efforts to keep Ontario families safe during the H1N1 pandemic. I look forward to the opportunity to review this legislation and to the discussion to take place in this Legislature.

Mr. Michael Prue: On behalf of the NDP caucus and particularly on behalf of the member from Nickel Belt, our health critic, I stand to respond to the minister.

In 2003, the SARS epidemic came to this province and shook, I think, to its very foundations the confidence that Ontario had in its health care system. Thankfully due to Dr. Sheela Basrur, who did an amazing job, the public confidence was restored. But people ask questions still to this day, six years later. How could there have been such poor coordination at the outset? How could our public health system have fallen so short?

Then we had H1N1 a couple of years ago, and Ontarians had their confidence shaken again. Ontarians were unsure why so many of the problems occurred: inconsistent advice, queue-jumping by the wealthy and sports heroes, exceptionally long waits for immunization and general chaos.

As a result, the NDP welcomed the report by Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. King. We think that this is a very positive step, this bill and what is happening here today, but it is obvious that the bill is not moving towards the breadth of Dr. King's recommendations.

Dr. King, in the process of the detailed review of the ministry's response to the pandemic, made the following statement in her June report, and I'd like to read this into the record: "As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is currently conducting a detailed review of its response to the pandemic. When it is released, the findings of the review will paint a much clearer picture of Ontario's H1N1 response than anyone has seen to date. I would urge those interested in a complete and technically detailed examination of what happened in this province during the pandemic to read it." Yet no one has seen this report. It has not been made available to this Legislature or to the public, and we have to question why.

We also have to question, why has the government not produced the report in a timely fashion? When will it be ready? I think that's a logical question in view of the announcement here today.

The government has also remained silent on the whole issue of queue-jumping. We in the NDP have gone and submitted FOI requests, freedom-of-information requests, but have been told that the documents will not be released. These are being hidden from this Legislature and from public view as well. Is the government trying to fix the system, which I think the minister honestly is trying to do? But if that is the case, is secrecy and denial

the right way to approach it? I ask this question because when you submit freedom-of-information requests—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I hear the groaning over there. When you submit them, you actually want the information, and then you find out that it is denied.

There is no question that it is vital for the chief medical officer of health to have the ability to direct public health units in real time during pandemics, but we have to ask the other questions. Will this lead to better planning and coordination prior to a pandemic? Are there teeth in this bill that would safeguard the system for the future? We need to know that, and we will have an opportunity, I'm sure, over the coming days and perhaps with future instruction from the minister's office, to study it to see whether, in fact, that's the case.

We also have to question the whole issue of Panorama. Panorama has been in development now for over six years, yet it is still not operational. That's a real question: Why is it not operational? It was supposed to have been up. It was supposed to have been running, and six long years later, we don't see anything. We need to know why. What is the problem that this program cannot get up and running?

We ask as well, when will Ontarians have the electronic health records system that they need? I know—and we on all sides of this House know—that a lot of money was spent on that electronic records system, and to date we haven't seen any fruits of that. When questioned in other committees about the monies that were spent, it's clear that we have not, to date, gotten value for the money. Ontarians need those answers as well.

1550

I welcome Dr. King; I congratulate Dr. King on the good job that she is doing. I am thankful that the minister is bringing forward this bill, but we have many, many questions on this side of the House, and the people of Ontario are demanding very real answers. They want to get to the bottom of this and they want to know the details. They don't want those details to be hidden from them. I'm hoping, in the full course of the debate, that the minister comes forward with all the information that, to date, we have not been privy to. We want to see Dr. King's report and we especially want to know about the queue-jumping and why we cannot see that detailed information from the report.

PETITIONS

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in

their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people diagnosed with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have been diagnosed with MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

I've given it to page Sarah.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I have signed this.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore

its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with page Tony.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, mostly signed by the people living in the Columbus area. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government's announcement regarding the eastward extension of Highway 407 indicates construction will end at Oshawa;

"Whereas ending the highway at Oshawa will mean undue traffic on smaller roads leading to Highway 407, while delaying the benefits of a completed Highway 407 for commuters, business, tourism, public transit and all stakeholders;

"Whereas the environmental assessment has not considered impacts of a partial completion of the highway;

"Whereas the completion of the eastern extension of Highway 407 to Highway 35/115"—50 kilometres—"is supported by" all citizens, businesses, community leaders, elected officials, and in fact it's the number one priority from the regional council of Durham.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—the McGuire government—"to support the eastward extension of Highway 407 to 35/115 in a single stage, as promised"—verbally and in their program—"by the Dalton McGuire government in previous infrastructure announcements. We request that Premier McGuire respond with a commitment for the completion of Highway 407 by a specific date" immediately.

I'm pleased to sign and support it and give it to Elizabeth, one of the pages, on her last week here.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions to do with paved shoulders from the Peterborough area. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on

designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition that I'm presenting on behalf of Community Living in the Upper Ottawa Valley.

“Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

“Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

“ARCH Disability Law Centre supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

“—Make the application and funding allocation process transparent; and

“—Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need.”

I affix my name to it and send it down with Jennifer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to see the change in the Chair. A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

“Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

“Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres”—CCACs—“to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment” where and when they need it.

I'm pleased to sign it and present it to Kyle, one of the pages who has a few days left here.

1600

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws exist in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I will send it to the table by Tony.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

“Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

“Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each

year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey's 'A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food' provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario's most vulnerable;

"Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Emily.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's titled "Haldimand-Norfolk needs an OSPCA chapter."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the establishment of a local Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) could help deal with the brutality and neglect of horses and other large animals; and

"Whereas the Ontario government could provide training for the Ontario Provincial Police to deal with animal abuse issues;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the Ontario government request the establishment of an OSPCA chapter in Haldimand-Norfolk to provide the two counties with support in cases of animal abuse and neglect."

I affix my signature.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this current Liberal government is directly responsible for their rising household debt by slapping them with higher taxes, such as the health tax and the HST, higher fees, higher hydro bills and higher auto insurance premiums; and

"Whereas the people have lost faith in their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election."

I've also signed it and ask Sarah to take it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure to present another petition here. This one here—there's thousands of petitions here, quite frankly. This one here reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacies now."

This is signed by a number of constituents, all of whom are worried generally about health care. I'm pleased to sign it, support it and give it to Jennifer.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians"—including the people of Ontario.

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

"Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey's 'A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food' provides an inexpensive and common sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario's most vulnerable;

"Whereas, if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act ... to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with this bill, affix my signature and send it down with Kyle.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters, when Bill 135 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day, pursuant to standing order 9(c), no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, December 2, 2010, during its regular meeting times for public hearings and be authorized to meet on Monday, December 6, 2010, at 2 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 10 a.m. on Monday, December 6, 2010. At 5 p.m. on Monday, December 6, 2010, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for clause-by-clause consideration

on Monday, December 6, 2010. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, December 7, 2010. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

1610

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I was wondering if this particular motion on a budget bill is in order. That's a question for the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Continuing the debate where I left off yesterday, just to summarize a little bit, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this time allocation bill, Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. I'd particularly like to point out that this is a time allocation bill, like a guillotine bill, as the member from Durham has pointed out, to try to bring to an end some fair comment and debate on this bill, and I think it's very unfair.

Just to sum up, this omnibus bill is just another in a long string of omnibus bills that this government has introduced. This act looks to amend up to 21 separate pieces of legislation in one fell swoop. Many of those amendments are highly technical, and rather than debate them individually, they have been presented in a single piece of legislation.

I started the debate yesterday, so I'm going to pick up where I left off. What I was doing at that time was reading into the record—because the government is famous for saying that everybody supports this. So what I did yesterday was read a number of letters from constituents who have written to me, to my office, both my constituency office and here in Toronto, telling me their opinions of this. So I'm starting out there.

Another writer to my constituency office said: "I am writing to advise you of our disgust with the HST being

applied to hydro bills. Once the smart meter comes into effect, the cost of hydro will increase. As the cost of hydro increases, the HST tax will be compounded. Granted, we can all do our part to use less electricity, but basically we feel that it is immoral to tax a necessity of life. Our displeasure with the Liberal government's approach—the cavalier approach—"to the citizens of Ontario re the HST on hydro will definitely influence how we will vote in the next Ontario election."

Another constituent writes, "Mr. Bailey, I just received my last Hydro One bill for \$183.76"—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Some of the honourable members have comments, Madam Speaker. They might wish to rise and debate the bill later; it's my turn right now. The member from Durham will bring them into line, I'm sure.

"The breakdown shows that I am using \$76.31 in electricity usage and \$107.45 in delivery/regulatory charges, debt retirement and HST. This is unacceptable. I am on a disability pension which I have to pay taxes on and which does not increase, and these outrageous charges just cut into my earnings."

A woman from Sarnia, a senior, writes: "I just received my hydro bill, and it was \$900, and \$200 of it was in taxes, delivery charges and debt retirement. I don't have a good feeling about these smart meters." A wise lady. "I feel it is only going to get worse. I need to vent because I work at a minimum wage job and am trying to make ends meet, and then I get this bill. I hope that you can start a petition on this. Something needs to be done. Thanks."

I have started a petition, and if people want to go to it, they can go to my website, www.bobbaileympp.com, and they can sign on to that petition.

I'd also like to point out that this seems to fall right into that Sussex Strategy Group, that document that happened to fortuitously fall into our hands. I'd like to stand in this House and express my disgust with that leaked document from the Sussex Strategy Group, suggestions for this government's fortunes in the next election. They said in their document that green energy companies, which are benefiting phenomenally by the Premier's energy experiments, should "confuse"—and that's their own word—the public and the media about the price of hydro.

I'm actually surprised that the media hasn't taken more umbrage with that. It's one thing to confuse the public. It's one thing to try to confuse the other members, their own members and their backbenchers, but to try to confuse the media and actually put that in writing—I'm surprised. Maybe that's why we've seen more stories about that lately in the media.

What does this say about the state of our province after seven years of the McGuinty rule when stakeholders like Sussex Strategy and many others feel that promoting the government's agenda is synonymous with an active effort to "confuse" the public and the media rather than to tell the truth? I'm worried about the province.

I'd also like to touch on the future of the Lambton generating station, which is an important employer in my riding and one of the last coal-fired generating stations in Ontario and, if I might add, one of the cleanest, if not the cleanest, coal-fired generating stations in North America.

I'd like to read into the record the remarks of the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I'd look to add too that we are doing some of the latest biomass research at Lambton generating station with the University of Western Ontario's research park in Sarnia–Lambton, one of the state-of-the-art research facilities. I'm sure that the OPG and this government, if they knew what they were doing, would take advantage of that and look forward to some input from them.

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan said this in the House the other day, "In August of this year, I was very pleased to announce that the Atikokan coal plant will remain a viable asset and be converted to biomass energy production. Just yesterday, I was very happy to announce that the Thunder Bay generating station will also remain open and be converted to natural gas."

I won't read all of his remarks.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: What's wrong with that?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I think it's great. What I would like to urge is that there's even more of a case at the Lambton generating station in my riding. We have a 16-inch main gas line that's less than a kilometre and a half away which could be accessed. That could keep that plant open. It provides a lot of employment for members in my riding, a number of my constituents. We have over 5,000 employees who are construction workers who could work in that plant, who have got the skills to do that. It wouldn't be as much of a stretch as it probably is in some of these other ridings to switch to natural gas.

I think the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has also supported converting to biomass and natural gas as well. I look forward to working with her on that: to keep that plant open and to provide those jobs. There's currently over 300 employees who work there, plus a number of other people in downstream industries who also work in that plant. It will be important downstream that we keep that plant operating.

Going further, there's also another article I'd like to quote. There's a gentleman who's been writing letters to the National Post, among a number of other articles in the paper recently. This gentleman's a retired banker by the name of Parker Gallant, and I'd like to read into the record an article in the National Post by Parker Gallant, a retired Canadian banker who looked at his Ontario electricity bill and didn't like what he saw. The article is entitled, "Ontario's Power Trip: Priced out of the Market." It ran in the National Post last April, prior to this government's announcement that energy rates would increase by another 46%. What Mr. Gallant said in the National Post, and on a number of other occasions, is:

"Ontario is getting less and less electricity at higher and higher prices. It's only going to get worse."

"As a former banker I have no direct expertise in the electrical sector. I was simply curious as to why my

electricity bill in Ontario went up when my consumption went down. What I found as I researched is a bewildering story of a province whose electrical sector is in trouble. Ontario is a high-price energy province and, under current policy, it is poised for a further escalation in prices. In short, Ontario is pricing itself out of the market and will not have the ability to attract any manufacturers or service sector companies that require significant energy in their daily processing.

"Electricity is already priced 65% higher in Ontario when measured against neighbouring Quebec and Manitoba, and the gap is likely to get bigger. How Ontario got to this state is not totally clear, but as a banker I looked first to the institutions that make up Ontario's electricity sector and the numbers behind those institutions. The government entities involved in the electricity sector all present their public profile as open and informative and priced competitively. What's really going on is another matter. Finding financial information is often difficult. Finding ratepayer information is almost impossible.

1620

"What I did find is a complex, unproductive, costly and expanding beehive of corporate and institutional activity that produces less and less electricity at an ever-rising cost. There are now six ... institutional players in the Ontario power market and one regulatory body. It's a giant megaplex of state control, each unit a part of the government power structure. How these entities came to be is an interesting story in itself, going back to the previous Conservative government's plans to privatize the industry....

"The six core players in the market, each controlled by the government, are Ontario Power Generation (OPG), which produces electricity; Hydro One, which manages the province-wide transmission and distribution grid; the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO)"—which I had the opportunity a week ago to visit, and I would recommend to all of the members, if they have the opportunity, to take advantage of that; it's quite an operation out there, based in Oakville—"which manages the hourly power needs and also operates a trading and pricing system; Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. (OEFC), which holds the stranded debt of the old Ontario Hydro and acts as a funding arm;" and also the OPA, "which acts as the government's policy execution vehicle.

"The first four of these operations are pieces of the old Ontario Hydro, including OEFC, which was set up in 2000 to hold \$30 billion in stranded debt left over from the province's past electricity management.... The energy board (OEB) has been in place for decades as the independent regulator.

"The current Liberal government under Premier Dalton McGuinty in 2004 set up the sixth entity, the OPA. The OPA functions as the official executor of government policy, and was recently given new powers under the" so-called forward-looking—in their words—"province's Green Energy Act." Other people have had

different opinions since then on that. "The act removed the ability of any remonstrance from municipal, civic or public communities in the province. Via government directive from the McGuinty cabinet, the OPA dictates the course for how electricity is to be generated and distributed throughout the province of Ontario for the next 20-plus years.

"What is this conglomeration of government-controlled agencies doing? One thing is clear. They are doing much less for a lot more money than they used to. The three main companies that actually operate the power system (OPG, Hydro One and the IESO) are a great source of high-wage jobs and rising salaries, but their actual productive activity is declining. I have attempted to consolidate the results of OPG, Hydro One and IESO to try and compare the current year's results with those that existed in 2000 when the three entities were combined. The number story is simple: Less electricity, higher costs."

Remember that, ladies and gentlemen out there in the video audience: less electricity, higher costs.

"This is what has changed in the last decade.

"Consolidated revenue grew by \$1.3 billion or 14.3% to \$10.5-billion, but gross revenue after fuel purchases"—this is at OPG—"were up by less than 1%. Expenses are another matter. Operations, maintenance and administration jumped by 44.9%"—almost 45%—"to \$4 billion. This is likely mostly employment costs. Employment jumped from 15,800"—almost 16,000 employees—"to 18,000 permanent and 3,000 contract and non-regular (Hydro One's word) employees after allowing for the 5,000 jobs OPG and Hydro One outsourced between the years 2000 and 2003. Despite the addition of all those people, electricity sold and distribution dropped 33.8 % and 5.5% respectively. Likewise available power capacity in megawatts fell from 25,800 to 21,729, a decline of 15.7%. Meanwhile, the cumulative debt as of December 31, 2010, had soared to \$11.1 billion, a gain of 31% or \$3 billion." These are the banker's figures. "This doesn't include the billions in debt held by the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.

"Collectively the CEOs managing these provincially owned companies took home \$4.7 million in salaries in 2009." Great work if you can get it. "Each of the three operating entities tells the same story. At OPG, whose responsibility is the generation of electricity, revenue is down from their 2000 year-end by \$338 million or 5.5%. Net profit is nominally up by \$18 million, or 3%. But that number was the result of a \$683-million gain from appreciation in the value of the company's nuclear decommissioning fund.

"Since 2000, OPG's generating capacity has fallen" almost 16%. I'm sorry; I've already read that.

"Hydro One's responsibility is transmission and distribution of electricity directly to Ontario electricity users and indirectly via municipal electric utilities," otherwise known as the MEUs. "The company's distribution system, in terms of size and power carriage, barely changed through the decade, but it keeps growing [in] costs and

employment. In 2009, Hydro One distributed 7.7"—almost eight—"terawatts less than it did in 2000, a decrease of slightly more than 5%. The distance covered by Hydro One's transmission lines increased by only 424 kilometres ... since 2000.

"But its employment numbers continue to skyrocket. Between 2000 and 2009, it took on 1,739 (after outsourcing 900 jobs in 2002 and granting early retirement to another 1,400 ...) employees, a gain of 52%. Almost half of its employees," 5,000 in the year 2008, "earned more than \$100,000 a year," according to the sunshine list.

"In keeping with the jump in employment, Hydro One's debt increased by 48% or \$2.251 billion since March 31, 2003. Meanwhile, Hydro One's rate increases for users continue to climb, by as much as 20% in 2009 alone. It has applied to the Ontario Energy Board for rate increases that could raise residential rates by over 20% in the next two years.

"The third leg to the operating entities is the Independent Electrical System Operator (IESO), which has responsibility for the management of the grid, projects daily usage to ensure adequate supply of electricity." The IESO, as I said, I visited a week ago, and I think they're doing great work down there. I'd advise all the members to take the opportunity to tour it.

"IESO gives priority to the most unreliable and most expensive electricity generators; wind and solar ranging in price from 13.5 cents to [a high of] 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour." When supply exceeds demand, the IESO tells these generators to throttle down the cheapest electricity, which is hydro and fossil, which is either gas or coal or a combination. "IESO also sets the 'wholesale' and 'spot' price through its trading activity. The 'wholesale' price, (when low) creates a 'provincial benefit' which is added to electricity bills of all wholesale clients and to direct marketing retail distributors. It adds three to four cents per kilowatt hour to ratepayers' bills. Excess power is sold or bought at a 'spot' price from other distribution networks such as the New York Power Authority," and others.

"IESO is small by comparison to OPG or Hydro One in respect to employment, but a higher proportion—65% of its 400-plus employees—were paid in excess of \$100,000 in 2009. IESO obtains long-term credit from OEFC, the debt-management arm of Ontario's electricity megaplex, and as of December 31, 2009, IESO owed OEFC"—all these acronyms are something else; no wonder people don't understand their bills—" \$78.2 million. IESO lost \$14 million in 2009 and its CEO could have retired at the end of the year with an annual pension"—get this—"of \$263,000.

"IESO will also be submitting an application to the OEB to recover the costs of managing McGuinty government directives to install 'smart meters.' The costs of this project, not disclosed, will run to more than \$2 billion. Consumers will pay on individual consumer hydro bills. IESO's website is loaded with information and seems to have better disclosure than the others

(except for their annual financial report)." Mr. Gallant "charted electricity consumption data from 2002 to get a feel on how demand is fueling the increase in Ontario's electricity rates. It isn't. Even though I chose the two 'highest demand' months of July and December, average hourly demand, lowest demand and peak demand are all down (anywhere from 6.4% to 23.5%). So if consumption is heading down, why are Ontario electricity bills going up?

"What is exactly behind all this new activity and employment levels? While the private sector has to contend with increasing productivity, downsizing or moving production elsewhere, Ontario's government-owned energy sector employees just keep getting fatter under legislation that has forced this sector to accept expensive undertakings that have driven capital expenditures up and market share and revenue down, largely to" fuel this green energy agenda.

1630

I'm going to wrap my remarks up, but I would like to urge the government to take a look at it if they're focused on this green energy agenda. Everyone realizes that green energy is going to be an important component as we go forward. It has to be at prices that people can afford.

I would like to urge that when they're looking at renovating and retrofitting plants, they certainly consider the Lambton generating station. The Lambton area is a willing host. St. Clair township, where the Lambton generating station is located, relies on the tax revenue and income that's generated from that Lambton generating station and will when it's retrofitted, if they make the decision to go to a combination of natural gas and biomass. Research is being done at that research facility at the University of Western Ontario located in Sarnia, and also supported by my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I read in the paper the other day. Moving on that route, we have the employees and the construction workers and the trades who can do the work. We've got a willing host, and we've got a natural gas supply line there, less than a kilometre and a half away. We could move on that in a short time.

Like I say, I'd urge the government, through OPG, to take a look at that and to keep that plant open for my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, because it's as important to it as it was to the member of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, who spoke about that importance the other day for his riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: We have a scant 40 minutes to participate in this debate because, as you see, this is a time allocation motion, and time allocation motions are inherently time-allocated, which is a regrettable thing. I look forward to addressing it. I'm going to be joined by my colleague the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, who will, in his usual style, deliver a barnburner in short order and rip out a new one for the government members that are here.

I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts right now, I'll bet you the farm—I could be wrong—but I'll bet you the farm

that government members won't be standing up defending their time allocation motion. I'll betcha dollars to doughnuts that the government backbenchers will be boycotting their own legislation.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Cowardly.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Hillier notes. For the life of me, why would they bring this kind of restrictive, jackboots, guillotine motion to this chamber, expect it to be passed and not even stand and defend it? You know why? Because it's indefensible.

I should make it quite clear that New Democrats will be opposing this type of goose-step legislation. New Democrats will resist this as strongly as we can. I'm sure we'll be joined by our official opposition colleagues. There is a paucity of democracy in this chamber, in this process.

It's not so much that the government wants to end second reading debate; it's that the government wants to close the doors to good Ontarians who may want to comment on this bill in the committee process. That's the most repugnant part of this type of legislative conduct—or misconduct, rather.

Let's understand what's happening: "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, December 2, 2010, during its regular meeting times for public hearings" and then on Monday, December 6, 2010, at 2 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

"At 5 p.m. on Monday, December 6, 2010," in clause-by-clause consideration, "amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto."

That is a tragedy. What that means is that there's no meaningful input for good folks out there, Ontarians who are hurting bad, Ontarians who on the one hand have been told that they're going to get a 10% cut on their electricity prices but, then on the other hand—it's always the other hand that hits you harder—are told that those same electricity rates are going to go up 46% over the course of the next five years. No disrespect to the official opposition, but you can bet your boots once again that those are going to be pretty conservative figures, because it's the government figures that were put forward in their so-called economic statement of a Thursday or so ago.

Is it any wonder, is it any surprise, does it shock you at all then, to learn that back in September or so, when Ipsos Reid polled Ontarians, three out of four Ontarians believed it was time for a change at Queen's Park? In fact, 76% of respondents said they would like to see another party in power. Does that surprise you at all? Does it shock you? Does it amaze you? Of course not, because every penny of that 46% increase accrued over the next five years is going to be taxed again by this government's newest tax, its HST.

On a daily basis, the revelations keep flowing. What did we learn about last week? We learned about installing

smart meters down in Windsor on vacant houses that were destined to be demolished. Who's doing the thinking here? What's going on? Vacant houses destined to be demolished, and they're installing smart meters on them. Then the minister, responding to the question, says, "Well, you've got to keep the houses heated." Why? Nobody's living in them. Are you going to be upset if the paint starts to crack because it gets cold? Come on. The houses are going to be torn down. They're going to be demolished.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: "The pipes will freeze," he says. No, you turn the water off out on the front yard, and you drain the pipes. They're going to be demolished. Or you go down in the basement or where the line comes into the house, you go over there, and you turn that valve shut. You shut it by turning it clockwise. I want the members to understand that. You've got to turn it clockwise to shut it, and then when you want to open it up again, you turn it counter-clockwise. Or if they've got a little petcock, you just swing the handle at 90 degrees to the flow of the pipe.

Andrea Horwath exposed that last week, and the government responds, "Well, we've got to keep the houses heated because they're going to be demolished." It's ludicrous stuff. That's why they've got so-called—mind you, let's be fair. These aren't smart meters; these are stupid meters. These are dumb-and-dumber meters. Did you see the movie?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Don't answer.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Shurman says, and he's bang on.

Understand that this boondoggle really is a fiasco. It's a botched-up mess. But there's a whole lot of people making money out of it; unfortunately, it's not the taxpayers of Ontario. They're paying a whole lot of money, \$1.5 billion, to install these not-so-smart, stupid, dumb-and-dumber meters, which jack up people's electricity prices.

Then we learn that in places like Windsor, their hydro utility has no confidence whatsoever in the ability of the meter to communicate with the central computer to be communicated with at the hydro authority, however that conduit happens.

The member over here in the official opposition is an electrician, and he could probably describe it with clarity and detail. He could probably get himself thrown out of the House in the course of doing that if he tried hard enough. But we'll wait to see whether the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington participates in this miserable debate. Lord knows, there's going to be enough time because I suspect the Liberals are boycotting their own debate. Why would they do that?

Mr. Robert Bailey: They're absent without leave.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Bailey notes.

1640

Mr. Paul Miller: They're AWOL.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's noted as well by my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Why does this government have this obsession with ending debate? Why do Liberals obsess about silencing people rather than encouraging debate, throwing the doors open and saying, "Let the debate flourish"? Why does this Liberal government beat up on the people of Ontario, tax them, abuse them, jack up their electricity rates? You just watch, because we've got some cold winter months coming on when the furnace is going to be running pretty regularly, when the electric water heater is going to be coming on more frequently. A season when people do their—look at what this government has done. This government has taxed the Christmas turkey. That gal or guy who puts the Christmas turkey in that electric oven to cook it is getting cooked by this government because every kilowatt of that electric power that's cooking that turkey is being taxed to the tune of 8% more than what it was before.

What miserable people these people are. What an attitude. What a vision of Ontario: Make people pay more for electricity and tax it to boot; make them pay \$1.5 billion for not-so-smart, stupid, dumb-and-dumber meters; tell them that their jobs are coming back when, in fact, those jobs are the \$11, \$12 and \$13 jobs instead of the \$25-, \$26- and \$27-an-hour jobs that were stolen away from Ontario under the watch of Mr. McGuinty and his gang of job—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member to refer to the Premier.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —Mr. Premier McGuinty and his gang of job stealers. The highwayman, the highwayman came riding, riding, riding. The highwayman, Premier McGuinty, stealing every job that every worker ever had in the province of Ontario; 300,000-plus of them, a whole lot of them down where I come from.

John Deere: 100 years of John Deere in the city of Welland. That plant has been out there on the canal in Dain City for 100 years. It wasn't that long ago when the last man standing shut the gate behind him. Nine hundred workers: 900 skilled workers; 900 welders, electricians and pipe fitters; 900 skilled people, and it was just a few months ago that the last man standing locked up, shut the door behind him.

You know what? I know those people. I know the women and men who worked at John Deere. I know them well and they're tough people. They're hard workers. They're skilled; they're talented. And you know what? A whole chunk of them have gotten jobs again, but they're not the unionized, high-wage jobs, the value-added manufacturing jobs, the wealth-creation jobs that Mr. McGuinty—that is to say, the Premier of Ontario—stole from them.

Just the other day in committee we had the Good Government Act. What a sad ruse when you try to con the people of Ontario with titles on legislation like Good Government Act when it's the last thing in the world that it should ever be called. Why, that con is contemptuous. That con is downright contemptible. It reveals a government thumbing its nose at the people of Ontario, it reveals a government giving its finger to the people of

Ontario, it reveals a government turning its back on the people of Ontario, and it reveals a government which 76% of Ontarians say has no business being in power anymore. Seventy-six percent of Ontarians say they have no business being in power anymore. Let's say there's a four-point margin of error. We've talked about this before. It could mean that only 72% of Ontarians want this government out of power or it could mean that 80% of Ontarians want them out of power. Eighty-six percent of Ontarians say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago: People understand what that means. People are feeling desperation. They're feeling fear. In some cases, they're feeling panic.

Just watch and wait. Just watch and wait until those furnace motors start chugging away come the coldest months of the year, January, February and March. People are going to be shaking their heads. People are going to be panicking about—they pay these Premier McGuinty hydro bills. It's going to be of little comfort to get a bill of \$200 or \$300 or \$350 come winter months—or more—and then to see, oh, there's a 10% reduction.

Why, just the other day we talked about that child tax credit—\$50 per kid—but you've got to spend \$500 to get the credit. And \$500 doesn't buy very much by way of, let's say, hockey or soccer or baseball or dance or other pursuits, theatrical classes or language classes. What's interesting is that you're going to pay more with this Premier McGuinty government's new HST on those dance lessons or on the hockey school than you're going to get back in the \$50 rebate. The government is giving you zip.

The member over here from Thornhill painted the perfect picture just a few days ago. He talked about the fellow being out in the overturned rowboat, hanging on for dear life; he's 200 feet out. Along comes his hero who is going to save him, throwing out a rope with one of those life rings. He's 200 feet out, and this guy says, "My goodness, finally some relief. Finally I'm going to be saved and rescued." But as the member from Thornhill says, he throws that life ring out, and the rope's only 150 feet long. It's 50 feet short of its target. All it's doing is mocking that guy desperately hanging onto the overturned rowboat trying to keep his head above water.

That's what Ontarians are trying to do. Ontarians are trying to keep their heads above water. Again, down where I come from, in places like Wainfleet, Port Colborne and Welland and Thorold and yes, south St. Catharines, a community I share with the Minister of Community Safety, people have lost jobs. People have seen pensions disappear, and people are seeing pensions erode. Fewer and fewer workers who are working have pensions.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Like here.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, no, MPPs must have a pension. Why would they have pension committee that has lunches once, twice or three times a year if they didn't have pensions? I think they're called defined contribution pension plans. I was here in this chamber in 1996 when Mike Harris, the Premier then, brought

forward a bill that abolished the MPPs' pension plan, and every single member of this chamber voted for it. Every single member of this chamber voted for it, every Liberal, every Conservative, every New Democrat.

The reality is that, increasingly, workers in the real world don't have defined benefit pension plans. They've got defined contribution pension plans, and they're funded at nowhere near the generous rate that MPPs' defined contribution pension plans are funded—the minimum salary here is well into the six figures.

There's hardly a member of this Legislature who's been lining up at the soup kitchen. There's hardly a member here who suffers from malnutrition. There's hardly a member here who finds themselves hungry.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Perhaps the Minister of Community Safety wants to participate in this debate. Members are being chastised very quietly, and for good reason, my friends—for good reason. Very wise counsel, very sage counsel you just got, member back there. You learned something.

Nobody here is emaciated. I don't think there are any members who are worried about paying their hydro bills this month.

1650

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, certainly not the ones who got a payout in 1996.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There's nobody here who's worried about paying their hydro bill, and we've got a lot of nerve in this chamber turning our noses up at folks who've lost jobs, who don't have pension plans, never mind a defined contribution pension plan, Mr. Yakabuski—10% of your salary every year, your salary in excess of \$130,000, in addition, paid into a defined contribution pension plan. That's not shabby stuff; that's pretty slick.

Some MPPs will ride off into the sunset come 2011, and some will be propelled into the sunset off the cliff in 2011. I've said this because I've seen the sweeps. I was here in the Peterson government—huge government, huge rump; biggest rump I've ever seen on a government. And I saw them defeated in 1990 in a huge sweep, and then in 1995, I saw that government defeated in a huge sweep; another government defeated and a new government elected. Finally, in 2003, a government defeated and in a huge sweep. Each and every time, it was a government that had become detached, remote, less and less thoughtful, more and more arrogant. One thing I've always said about those kinds of sweeps is that good people get defeated, people of all political stripes, and I've watched it over the course of those successive elections, and people who have no business being here get elected because they ride in on a sweep. They don't ride in on any real merits.

There are some government members I'm going to be sad to see go, and I'm not going to suggest to you that it's at all fair, but you thought it was just fine in 2003, didn't you? You thought it was pretty darned slick, and you thought it was darned fine, those of you who were

watching it on television back in 1987. Remember that, Speaker? You barely remember it, I know that. You were so young.

We'll have lots of time to say goodbye to my friends across the way, who are now very quiet—they've become silent—who are looking down and looking away and perhaps working on their resumé. I wish you well, but you've brought it upon yourselves.

I'll tell you what. One Liberal member stand up today and vote against this time allocation bill, vote against this time allocation motion. Show your constituents that you've got the guts and the gonads to stand up to a Premier's office that bullies you on a daily basis and makes you ask humiliating backbench questions during question period. One of you stand up, and I'll give you a clip for your householder that will rot your socks. One of you vote against this time allocation motion and show that you've got what it takes to be a member of the Legislature and not to be bullied by a Premier's office or by the lure of perks or the occasional junket. I'm sorry, Mr. Lalonde. I meant nothing personal. There are a few of them who belong to that club, aren't there? There are a few of them.

I do dearly want to leave time for my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I wait to hear something, anything, other than a squeal or a howl from a government member, or perhaps the blurting of fear of the unknown.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bleating, bleating.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Bleating. Thank you. No, bleating is sheep. No, no, blurting, as in blurting out.

I will sit in thorough silence, waiting for a government member to stand up and announce that she or he will stand up to the bullies in the Premier's office and vote against this ill-advised time allocation motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I guess the member for Welland does indeed have insight into the Liberal Party. Not one Liberal member stood up to speak to this time allocation motion, and the honourable member did indeed recognize it.

Madam Speaker, would it be out of order for me to ask that the Liberals wake up and engage in this debate? Would that be out of order?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, it would.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I guess we'll let them have a little snooze there. I wonder if some debate may actually get them engaged and woken up over there.

But looking through this time allocation motion and Bill 135 reminds me of the time when I worked in public works. Back in public works, in construction management and project management, we had in place a very long process system that never worked, but it was a long, cumbersome process. What it was, we would have various levels of people within public works checking over the plans and checking over the specifications on every project. Lo and behold, the person at the end of the

project would find out that the project was all mucked up and it didn't work. They'd scratch their heads and wonder how this did not get caught. How did these problems not get caught? I realize that we had checkers checking the checkers checking the checkers being checked. Nobody actually did their job because somebody else was going to be doing the checking. They had so many levels of checkers, nobody actually had to do any work.

This reminds me of the Liberal caucus. We have people in the ministries, people in the bureaucracies, people in the agencies, all supposedly doing their work, and guess what? The final checkers are asleep. They're asleep and they're not engaged. We now understand why Ontario is in such a predicament, with the same process that we saw in public works in construction management in the Liberal Party today.

It really is a travesty to the people of Ontario that this bill is being passed, and it's being passed by people who have not read it. It is being passed by people who don't have any interest in actually understanding what their vote leads to.

Let me just give you a couple of examples under schedule 7. We know that this bill affects 21 pieces of legislation, and we know that this time allocation motion is to prevent discussion. This motion is to deny people knowledge of what's in this bill. But let me just point out a couple of things under Bill 135 that the Liberals either do not know, do not care about, or maybe both. Maybe they just have no interest in their final role of being the checkers.

Under schedule 7, "Several amendments are made to section 1.0.10 of the act, which sets out the authority of treasury board to make regulations, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

So we're moving some decision-making off on regulations.

1700

Now, listen to this: "Currently, subsection 1.0.16(2) of the act specifies that the Minister of Finance is not permitted to delegate certain specified powers...." This changes now. Under this act, the minister is now permitted to sub-delegate his authority. Did you know that? Did the member from Peterborough know that you're sub-delegating out that authority? This happens again throughout.

Listen to this one: "An amendment is made to section 37 of the act respecting the use of warrants to enforce the obligation to pay tax. Subrule 60.07(2) of the rules of civil procedure requires that leave of the court be obtained before certain writs are issued. The amendment provides that this rule does not apply for the purposes of section 37." Did any member of the Liberal Party read that? Did the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry or the member from Northumberland realize—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to make your comments to the Chair, not to members individually.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Did they realize that they are diminishing and taking away our time-honoured pro-

tections of civil liberties? We're now saying the court does not need to issue the writs; it's just ministerial staff who can do it. We do away with the courts.

This is also done—the same thing applies—under section 132 of the act, respecting the use of warrants to enforce the obligation to pay a tax. This rule no longer applies under here.

There are so many acts that are infringed on here—the same with the WSIB. This act now allows the WSIB to go into its reserve funds. We know that the WSIB has increased the unfunded liability up to \$12 billion, and instead of solving that problem, by a little sleight of Liberal hand, we now have another mechanism for the WSIB to keep pumping up that unfunded liability by dipping into their reserve funds.

Did any of the members on the Liberal side understand that? Did they read that? I doubt it very much. We've seen by the puzzled looks over there, when they are awake, that they haven't read this act. That's so obvious, and really, we can intuitively know that anybody who read this act would not be signing off on it. They would not be approving it or endorsing it; they would be looking for serious amendments to it. However, we have, with this time allocation motion, no viable means to amend this bill. It's all going to be done on Thursday this week. Any clause that has not been moved will be deemed to be moved on Thursday. It's a travesty, and it's a travesty that could be prevented if only the Liberal members of their caucus actually stood up and defended the interests of their constituents and did their job, and were not just concerned about or accepting that all the other checkers did their job.

There are also significant changes under the alcohol and gaming regulations, with significant changes on taxation on beer and wine. Here's another one: Under section 50 of that act, "subrule 60.07(2) of the rules of civil procedure does not apply in respect of a warrant issued by the minister" under this clause. We can go through hundreds of pages of legislation and see this theme throughout the legislation, that the Liberals just don't care about due process, about justice or about civil liberties. Again, section 20 of the same act is amended so that the Rules of Civil Procedure does not apply with respect to warrants issued by the minister. On and on and on it goes.

The Financial Administration Act is significantly modified under Bill 135. Here's another one:

"Accounting policies and practices ...

(2) Regulations made under clause (1)(c.1) may authorize or require public entities to follow specified accounting policies and practices.

I'm not sure what they're trying to change there, but when you go to the next page, schedule 10 of the Interim Appropriation for 2011-2012 Act—and I just would like any one of these Liberal members to say—here's subsection 2(1):

"For the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2012, amounts not exceeding a total of \$70,400,000,000 may be paid out of the consolidated revenue fund or recog-

nized as non-cash expenses to be applied to the expenses of the public service that are not otherwise provided for.”

What’s this \$70 billion for? Does anybody over there know what that \$70 billion is for? Has anybody cared to investigate? Or are you just going to put your hand up like puppets and just pass it? Do we need to know what \$70 billion is going to be used for? Obviously, this Liberal government, these Liberal members, don’t believe so.

We could go on and on with the travesty of this time allocation motion, but as we do, we know that the Liberals are still asleep at the switch and they won’t wake up until they’re kicked out in 2011.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: When I look at the title of this bill, “Helping Ontario families,” I find that very interesting. I’d like to bring forward my own concept of helping Ontario families and what it would look like. I think helping Ontario families would start off by saying maybe they should have accepted—this government turned down, to a person, anti-scab legislation. Why I say that is because anti-scab legislation in BC and Quebec has been very successful in getting people back to work.

Just from my own experience, I can tell you about the nine months at Inco, a Brazilian outfit; Lake Erie Works, one year they were out; now US Steel, Hilton Works in Hamilton, in my own riding. How long are they going to be out? Nobody knows. This is the type of thing that would be avoided if this government had voted for anti-scab legislation. People would be back to work. So they certainly are not helping the families of Ontario like this bill says—“Helping Ontario families.”

Let’s talk about their 10% rebate for hydro. They ask what our plan is. I’ll be glad to address that. You look at the 10% that the finance minister stood up and talked about the other day. He was very proud of it. In fact, he got a standing ovation, but what they didn’t do is look on page 11. On page 11, in smaller print, the minister admits that the hydro rates in the next couple of years—three or four years—are going to go up 42%, and when the Samsung deal gets into play, and other green venture allies for solar and wind power, it’s going to go up to 70%. The 10% that they’re offering is temporary, and as was stated yesterday, at the stroke of a pen by the Premier, that can end. So I don’t get a warm feeling, no pun intended, on hydro. I don’t get a warm feeling about where they’re going with this big rebate.

Several of them will stand up and say, “What’s your plan? You don’t have a plan.” Well, let me talk about the plans that we’ve had over the last three years since I’ve been here that have fallen on deaf ears, were shot down on committee, to a person, by the Liberals.

1710

Let’s talk about revitalizing our economy, getting people back to work. Let’s talk about the 10% tax rebate for manufacturers that the NDP brought forward—dead in the water; didn’t happen. Let’s talk about the bill we brought forward for 50% Ontario content, Canadian

content—died; didn’t go anywhere. Let’s talk about the bill that we brought forward for Buy Ontario—died; didn’t go anywhere.

Now let’s go back to that title again, “Helping Ontario families.” I think not.

Let’s talk about the bill that the official opposition brought forward to give farmers a tax credit for donating excess food and excess fruit to food banks—died. Geez, now they don’t want to help them with jobs; they want to starve them. That’s really good for the people of Ontario.

They talk about generation of electricity. I’ll tell you a little story. When I was lobbying for the Steelworkers in Ottawa, at the time, the Liberal government—I believe the member was Tony Valeri from Hamilton; he was the Liberal House leader in Ottawa. He promised the city of Hamilton—Stelco—\$30 million for cogeneration from our coke ovens at Stelco. We were going to run coke oven gas and we were going to put the additional electricity into the grid, a wonderful plan. You’ve got coke ovens at Dofasco. They generate a huge amount of megawatts. That could bring a lot of megawatts on to the system, because of the heat that comes out of those furnaces. It’s just enormous what they could do for generators and things.

Did it happen? No. It just died. Mr. Valeri wasn’t in office, and that \$30 million for cogeneration on coke ovens went out the window. That was, I don’t know, five, six years ago that they were talking about that. It still hasn’t happened. It would have been enough generation probably to heat and have enough electricity for about 7,000 homes in Hamilton, plus sell to the grid. It didn’t happen.

They had a gas plant lined up for Oakville. Through public pressure—and no disrespect to the member. He was under a lot of pressure not to have that put there. Eventually they backed down, after telling us it was a good thing to generate megawatts. Now they’re looking for a new home for it. That’s interesting. He even mentioned Hamilton to me. We’ve got about 50, 60, 70 acres sitting down on the waterfront that can’t be used for anything because it’s so polluted. Did they talk about going there with it? No. And it’s miles away from any residential area. No, we didn’t hear anything about that. There’s another one.

I could go on all day about the screw-ups that have gone on.

Let’s talk once again about helping Ontario families. Are our pensioners part of an Ontario family? Grandpa, grandma, even younger ones in their 50s and 60s who are on pensions, are they part of Ontario families? I think they are. What did they do to help them? They brought in pension reform: all administrative changes, all changes to how to handle the funds, wind-ups, but not one penny to the PBGF, which hasn’t changed since 1980. It’s still at \$1,000. You can’t live on what they’ve got in there, and it wouldn’t last two years if a major company went under anyway.

Then we asked for a pension agency instead of having these slicksters with the financial things and these money

managers and that handling the pension funds. We asked for a publicly run pension agency similar to CPP—didn't happen. This government blames Ottawa. Even though they're in charge of 74% of the pensions in this province, let's blame Ottawa.

They won't even talk about the 66% of Ontarians who don't have a pension at all—won't do it. We brought forward an Ontario pension plan that would have helped those people. Where did it go? It fell on deaf ears—wouldn't read it, wouldn't look at it, didn't want to touch it.

Let's go back to that title again, "Helping Ontario families." I don't think so.

Let's move on to injured workers. Injured workers are in Ontario families. What have they done to take injured workers out of poverty? They've given them 1%—1%. What's that going to do? And they won't get rid of those terrible, terrible programs called deeming and experience rating, which I have brought forward several times in this House. They wouldn't get rid of that either.

Cost of living: Give the injured workers a cost of living so they can at least keep their head above water. Didn't happen.

So I could go on for an hour about things they could do to help Ontario families, but they don't do it. They don't do it, and they're not going to do it, but they'll find out next year what's going to happen.

Now I'd like to move on to our favourite thing: time allocation. We're simply outraged. This government is yet again shutting down debate on this legislation. Why is the government doing it again? Because they're using the heavy hammer of time allocation. Time allocation only ensures that there are as few people as possible allowed to speak at public hearings or members allowed to bring forward their constituents' opinions to the bill. Why is this government shutting down debate? Because it's afraid. It's afraid to listen to the people of Ontario. They'll start asking those ugly questions that they can't answer to get to the real bottom of the issue, the real impact on their lives. They don't want to talk about it. They want to hide behind time allocation.

Let's be clear: We're dealing with basically truncating the time that we're going to have to debate this bill in the House. For the government to argue that somehow or other the world will come to a stop if they don't move this ahead without debate I think is a bit of a stretch, to say the least. To suggest somehow that time allocation is about the efficient disposition of business—if we brought that argument forward to a very democratic thing we are charged to do, we would be in big trouble, failing in our jobs as legislators. There are sufficient rules within our legislative processes to provide members an opportunity to express themselves on legislation that they have reservations about. The key word there is "reservations." But if you can't bring it forward and you can't talk about it and they won't let the public talk about it, I guess your reservations are going to stay inside you. This is a disservice to all Ontarians. It diminishes their right to speak to their government, to the people they elected to represent them.

Rather than making time allocation motions, this government would better serve the people of Ontario by rewriting the rules so that we can divide a piece of legislation and vote on sections of it. I have said this since I got here. The finance minister stands up, the Premier stands up, and many members over there stand up and say, "Your party voted against that." Well, if you get the budget bill, it's either you like it or you lump it. You can't break it down and vote for the things that are good or the things that are bad. They don't tell the public that. Well, I'll tell the public that. So if there are two good things in there and you don't vote for it, they say, "You voted against the budget bill," but there could be 60 to 100 things in there that stink, and that's why we vote against the budget bill. That's what people should know out there, no?

Rather than making time allocation motions, this government would better serve the people of Ontario by rewriting rules so they can divide it. Why don't you divide it, clause by clause? You do it in committee. Why can't we vote on the budget clause by clause? No way. No way, because that's going to make them look bad. Municipal councils do this on a regular basis. I served on municipal council; we went clause by clause. Why can't they do it here? We did it all the time, and we got a lot of good stuff done. The outcome of this is that the public can actually see what is hidden in the bills, particularly the all-encompassing omnibus bills, as members are asked to vote on individual sections that they agree with. That's a good, healthy process. You get to vote on particular issues you have concerns about, not the whole bag of goodies that are no good. It is a more transparent way to do business and allows our constituents to speak to specifics and have a real say in the laws that we pass in this House.

It is apparent the government is on the run. They're hiding; they're pushing things through that are unpopular. They are on the run. They know that most of their legislation is flawed—it's minuscule at best—and will not stand the test of full public scrutiny, so they move to time allocation so they don't have to deal with the public. The public will remember these weak actions of a failing government next year. They will know that, in this crunch, the McGuinty Liberals took the route that prevented them and their elected representatives from fully engaging in the legislative process.

1720

I've spoken about this before, and I will likely have to speak about it again in the spring session. Time allocation—what a disgrace. I can't see this group across the floor recognizing the wrong in their ongoing attempts to keep the public from full input and scrutiny of legislation that will affect their daily lives. People are very concerned about jobs, health care, the economy—the list goes on and on. They get failing marks on all of the above, all of them. I can't think of anything good.

I will continue to be vigilant in speaking out against this debate-stopping action by a governing party on the run. I will continue to speak up for Ontarians and Hamil-

tonians and work to ensure that they have full access to debate and finalization of legislation, if that can be done. It's a very long road, a very big wall to climb, and I don't have a ladder because they chop the legs out from beneath my ladder every time I get close to something good.

They either want to take it for their own and pass it six months down the road—and it's miraculous around here. Things that come from this side of the House just magically appear about 10 months later, and it becomes a Liberal idea and a Liberal bill. You know what? Frankly, I don't care. If it gets through and it's good, that's good.

But when Mr. McGuinty stands over there and says on many occasions, "We have to work together for the people of Ontario. We have to stand up," it's a load of nonsense. It's so partisan in here, it makes me ill. They should issue travel bags at every one of these tables, the number of times I get sick listening to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: In the very few minutes I have, I want to raise some issues of concern. Certainly, our member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, our critic Mr. Miller, is seriously disappointed; I know that. I can just see the time he'll spend here on Thursday, how frustrated he must be about it—I know personally—and also on Monday the 6th. What this is going to do: They have just rammed this thing through, the guillotine motion of all guillotine motions, to ignore even the most genuine, sincere and compassionate input of anybody on any side of the House. They're finished listening to us, and that's the issue.

I can only say that I have so little time that I sort of know—first of all, for the viewers of Ontario, Bill 135 is actually going to give you a 10% cut on your energy bill, but you're paying for it. In fact, it's borrowed money. It's going to cost \$1.1 billion to do that, and that's future debt. That's future taxes for you and your children. Don't let them buy you with your own money. That's just plain foolish.

What I will talk about is a couple of other programs, though, that I think affect the economy. I have three points in the six minutes I have. First of all—my notes are here—the citizens of my riding of Durham have been active, and they've been disappointed by this McGuinty government.

The number one issue is—the 407 group is here today. I want to thank the organizers. I specifically met with them. I know Minister Wynne met with them, but she isn't going to change her mind. She made it very clear. She stood toe to toe and refused even the most genuine of suggestions about how to solve this.

Rosemary McConkey's, her program, you can look it up, is Don't End 407 at Simcoe Street. What is really behind this? Let's put a bit of tone to it. First of all, it was in their election document; it was a promise, much like the one about not raising your taxes. Not only that, I have the original document here with me that Greg Sorbara signed, and he said, "I concur." That was from Lawrence

Cannon, the federal minister, as well as the Minister of Finance, James Flaherty. That was the minister at the time. He agreed. Premier McGuinty agreed. He said it, he wrote it, and now he breaks his word. People who don't respect their word should not be trusted. That's the leader.

I'm not making this up. I'm respecting the people from my riding who drove in the rain and bad weather today to come to Queen's Park to be ignored. The people of Ontario won't take it. They won't take this time allocation motion.

I've got one more thing as well. This is another one. This one is about an issue that I spoke to Minister Gerretsen on. Our critic Julia Munro, who's sitting in the chair now, has worked tirelessly on this bill. This is a bill that was introduced after Sunrise. Most members won't get this, Madam Speaker, so I want it on the record, because I'm going to be sending it to Gord Ellis and others. This is the issue of the propane regulation. It's called regulation 440/08.

They have worked openly and honestly with the ministry, specifically Frank Denton. Minister Gerretsen more or less promised me that we were going to meet last weekend and they were going to resolve this barrier. What is this barrier? I put this to you, Madam Speaker: This thoughtless regulation has been hoodwinked by TSSA. What it does is downloads and abrogates their responsibilities to engineers, and if the engineers do this draft plan for each site that has a propane distribution centre, this regulation will put all of the small businesses out of business. That's what it's designed to do. They have been hoodwinked by the large operators, and I put to you that this is an example of not working with small business. It's red tape and regulations that are killing jobs and small business, and mostly affecting small-town Ontario.

Another example—they should give me more time. I'll seek unanimous consent in a moment.

The real issue here—yesterday I had a briefing from the competitiveness bureau. They issued a book—and you just took it on me, unfortunately—Today's Innovation, Tomorrow's Prosperity. What does this report say? I'll tell you what it says: Your plan isn't working. These are the experts—and there's a good article that I'd encourage members to read. In your riding, you're here to represent constituents, not the platitudes of some hacks from the Liberal side or, for that matter, any side.

This is in the Globe and Mail; it says, "New Skills, No Jobs." The Second Career plan fails. It's in this booklet here, and it's in this article written by an academic. I'll give you an example. Read this. It says:

"Mr. Khanna, 42, signed up for the Ontario-funded Second Career program. But the experience has been disillusioning. The government didn't cover the full costs of the nine-month-long training program (tuition costs totalled \$24,000, he says), leaving him to pay about \$1,000 a month" in expenses.

He went on to say that he has a bachelor's degree in science and nine years of work experience prior to losing

his \$33-an-hour job. He can't find a job and he's spent about as much as a person would make a year on minimum wage to find a job. This is just one example.

I encourage members on the government side—why you're losing traction here is, you're not listening. The Premier's not listening and most members aren't listening. This bill is a time allocation. You've stopped doing the job of working for the people of Ontario and you've lost your way. I am so disappointed that you have to use these draconian motions to limit debate and then foreclose it.

There's another bill on housing. I'm suspicious of the housing bill as well. On the housing bill they've got two days; they're going to lump it into Christmas. Nobody's paying attention. You have a homeless problem that you've created, and that bill does nothing. The rent-geared-to-income provision is the only change. There's not one house built.

Your government is not listening. All I can say in the last minute I have is, I live in Ontario, too, and it's not all about politics. It's about doing the right thing for the right reasons in the province of Ontario. You're no longer governing because you're no longer listening.

There are things you could do to make this better. I'm hearing it almost every day in the hospitals, pharmacies, schools, farm business, the environment. I'd like them to get up in their rebuttal here and give me one thing in Ontario that's working.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. I want one of them to stand and give me one thing that's working.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: It is so disheartening at this time of year. In fact, the issue is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Continue.

1730

Mr. John O'Toole: The issue, in all sincerity, is that they have been told not to say a word.

Interjection: Zip it.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. In fairness, we've got to respect that. They refuse to participate in this time allocation. They know it's wrong, and if they were speaking and representing their constituents in the ridings, I'm sure they would stand and say for once that doing the right thing is the right thing to do. I'm challenging them to respond, to give us a short list, a long list, any list of some of the achievements in the last month or two.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Time has elapsed. Further debate?

Mr. Gravelle has moved notice of motion number 51. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have a deferral slip to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on government motion 51 be deferred until deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Government order G122.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: I'm referring to standing order 79(b). If you take a look at the time allocation motion, it indicated that the bill "may" be called on the day that it is discharged from committee. It was discharged from committee today. Standing order 79(b), however, requires that "when a bill has been amended in any committee it shall be reprinted as the Clerk of the House directs, amendments being indicated, and shall not be further proceeded with until it has been reprinted and marked 'Reprinted' on the Orders and Notices paper."

The third reading of the bill, the bill as amended in committee, has not been reprinted and is not available to us. If the standing order were to be circumvented—because it doesn't say "shall be" ordered for third reading; it says "may be"—it would be necessary for the time allocation motion to say, "may be ordered for third reading, notwithstanding 79(b)."

There are previous rulings of the Chair, because there is the reference at the very onset to "notwithstanding" in the time allocation motion similar to the one that was just debated, and the rulings of the Speaker, as I understand and recall them, are that that "notwithstanding" doesn't apply to subsequent parts of the actual motion that's passed; it applies to the initial proposition in terms of it being a time allocation motion and the usual orders of a process of the bill through its stages.

I also understand that there may be a ruling by the Speaker in a previous instance where the order paper, because it's printed in the morning, did not have "Reprinted" on it. However, the bill was printed because the bill wasn't called until later that afternoon—do you understand what I'm saying, Speaker? Clearly, it would be impossible for the order paper itself to be reprinted, but it is possible for the bill to be reprinted.

I put that to you. I acknowledge that there is precedent there, but that precedent is not adverse to the argument I make. Furthermore, there have been previous rulings of the Speaker that make it clear that the original—bear with me for just a second—pursuant to standing order 47—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Shh. The standing orders indicate that a point of order shall be heard in silence.

The previous rulings—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. You may continue.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

Previous rulings have indicated that subsequent parts of the time allocation motion are not covered by the preliminary paragraph. I'm submitting here that 79(b) is very clear. It says that it "shall be reprinted ... and shall not be further proceeded with until it has been reprinted." It hasn't been reprinted, and the time allocation motion moved by the government House leader—I didn't write it; she did—did not say that it "may be called notwithstanding 79(b)." I suppose it's as simple as that.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm going to agree with my colleague the House leader from the third party. It's very clear on page 39, in standing order 79(b), that the bill must be reprinted.

Yesterday we were in committee, and there were several amendments, some of which the government itself had adopted, that were put forward by the NDP as well as by our party. Therefore, they are required to reprint the bill according to these standing orders.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They may want to shout us down, but the reality is that these are the rules we work with in this House. They may not like them, but they are the rules, and there's not a lot of wiggle room there. I will defer to you, Madam Speaker, for your wise advice and counsel on how we might proceed, but it seems that the rules here are very clear.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would just note that neither of my colleagues has actually indicated any precedents for their conjecture and philosophization over the standing orders.

Under section 47, "The government House leader may move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to any proceeding on a government bill or substantive government motion."

Our time allocation motion reads as follows in the first line, which is what the member for Welland failed to complete: "That, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 122," which, in my view, would eradicate the need to adhere to standing order 79.

As well, the time allocation motion is very clear in the third-last paragraph: "That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy," which we did, "the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day."

We are following the time allocation motion that was duly passed in this House. The time allocation motion included a notwithstanding clause with respect to other standing orders that may impact Bill 122. This time allocation motion is completely in accordance with the rules of this House and the standing orders, and I would argue that we should continue with third reading debate on Bill 122.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm going to take a 10-minute recess.

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is exactly what I spoke to, the phrasing, "pursuant to standing 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order." The "notwithstanding any other standing order," I submit to you, qualifies standing order 47.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Sh. The reality is that we literally don't have a bill in third reading form. We don't have a bill as amended to refer to, even during the course of a one-hour debate. To be fair, the Clerk's table has a copy of the bill as it was reported from the committee, but it has the amendments merely attached to it. The amendments aren't inserted in the bill, for instance, in proper order. So we don't have the third reading form of the bill to even refer to during debate. I leave that with you as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. As I already said, we'll take a 10-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1739 to 1753.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Earlier today, Bill 122 was reported to the House from the standing committee, with certain amendments. Pursuant to the time allocation motion passed on November 4, when the report of the committee on Bill 122 was received and adopted, the bill was ordered for third reading. The November 4 time allocation motion also contained the provision that the order for third reading of the bill could be called on the same day it was reported from committee, and indeed that is what the House leader did a few minutes ago when orders of the day was called.

I will say that this precise scenario occurred in 1996 when, on January 29, Bill 26 was reported to the House. On the same day, Bill 26 was called during orders of the day even though it had been amended but not yet reprinted. The Speaker at the time ruled that it was in order for the debate to proceed. There are other similar instances where time-allocated bills have withstood similar points of order.

I am satisfied that the time allocation motion the House passed on Bill 122 made clear provision for the ability for the bill to be called in this situation, and I will now allow the debate to proceed.

I will recognize the minister to move third reading of the bill.

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la

responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: I wonder if it would be possible for members of the opposition to have a copy of the bill as amended before we embark on debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

If there is no objection, I will instruct the table to provide photocopies of the bill with the amendments. Thank you.

The minister has moved third reading of the bill.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We are delighted to start moving on the third reading debate of Bill 122. I look forward to hearing what the opposition has to say in the third reading on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: Can you tell me how the bill is amended, so as to debate it? We've asked for a copy of it—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We've agreed to provide that for you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But how can we debate?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The debate has commenced and the bill will be available as quickly as possible.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Before we start—okay, we have seen them reset the clock. I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

I understand there's two minutes to debate this.

I am shocked, upset and angered with the government at this point in time, and let me tell you why. First of all, we begin this debate on accountability—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is that the Liberal government has refused to provide opposition members

with the third reading printed bill. We have not seen the amended version of the bill that was rushed through this Legislature, the so-called accountability bill with "transparency" attached to its name. The reality is that this is a government that does not want the opposition to speak, does not want to listen to the opposition bring forward our—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I've never been so ashamed of my government as I am at this present moment for what they have done to the Legislative Assembly, particularly members in the opposition, whether it is the Progressive Conservative caucus or the third party, the NDP. The reality is that this bill, which is a knee-jerk, gut reaction to an auditor's report, had so many flaws within it that it had to be amended in the very short period of time that we were able to actually have deputants come to committee and then put forward amendments, many of which were reasoned, which were defeated by this Liberal government. However, a few were brought forward and amended, and we in the opposition have not been given the decency by this government to see what that bill looks like. Then what we have is a very short period of time to debate the merits of Bill 122. And what does this government do? They decide they want to rush this bill through in a 60-minute debate—60 minutes for 107 members to adjudicate—

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I draw the members' attention to the fact that it is 6 o' clock and that this House stands adjourned until 9 o' clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough–Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London–Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud–Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley–Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa–Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton–Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC) Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB) McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakubuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Toby Barrett
Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Leeanna Pendergast, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Steve Clark, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, M. Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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